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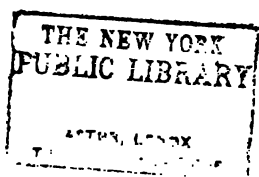


Gertrude L. Waedo  
Spring 1958 -

## Houses of Glass

STORIES OF PARIS







HERE, TO THIS HOUSE OF GLASS

*HELEN MACKAY*

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# Houses of Glass

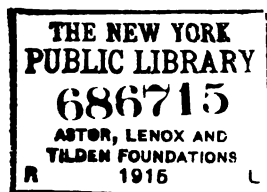
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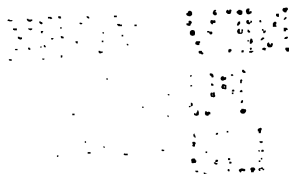
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TO SOMEONE .  
WHO WILL NEVER READ THEM





## HOUSES OF GLASS



## I

### HERE, TO THIS HOUSE OF GLASS

HERE, to this very smart restaurant, women of both worlds, the World and the Half World, came to stare at each other.

The women of the Half World were brilliant things in the brilliant place; white shoulders, gay tropical plumage, gestures, voices, laughter, jewels, and strange eyes. They belonged to it in a way that made one feel oddly homeless, as if there were nowhere else in the world to go than to such brilliant places of mirroring walls and lights and music and heat, of odours of wine and fruit and cigarette smoke and dying flowers. One got a nightmare sense of there being no home, none anywhere, for weariness, — no quiet, shaded resting-place, — only houses of glass.

Houses of glass, houses of glass, — there are many stories beginning «The King's daughter lived in a house of glass.»

Here the women of the great world might come sometimes just to look in. One knew them for what they were, however they were dressed, whatever they did,—intruders in the house of glass. Their souls might be scarlet too, but the strangeness was not in their eyes.

And yet, to one watching, it was part of the nightmare fancy that all these women were really only one woman,—perhaps a wax figure, beautifully dressed, with the smile painted on, and glass eyes; or perhaps a gargoye, stone, with blind balls for eyes, and a smile that the storms and the ages could not change.

The people at the most conspicuous table in the room were making a great racket, throwing things at one another, spilling champagne, and singing with the music. They were Americans, such « nice » people that they could do whatever they pleased.

The younger woman — a girl who could n't have been twenty, and was so pretty one almost forgave her her consciousness of charm — rested her elbows on the table, chin

in hands, and stared around her, talking aloud about everything, as if nobody could possibly understand English.

The woman of the Half World who sat with a duke and two princes at the next table looked annoyance and whispered, as she sipped her hot milk :

— Barbarians.

The duke said to her, across the table :

— I know who those people are. They are very chic. Everyone who goes to America must have letters to that sort. The boy and girl were married last week ; the papers have been full of them, pages on pages of wedding. I read in the *Figaro* that they'd arrived in Paris yesterday.

— And the first thing they do, said the woman, is to come here. — She looked curiously at the little bride. — I don't at all understand.

She was leaning back against the velvet cushions. There was something indescribably tired in the way she let her lovely bare arms fall along her sides, with her hands palms upward on the seat. There was

weariness in her eyes too as they met those of the little bride.

The man beside the little bride whispered :

—That is La Glorieuse ; immensely in vogue, supposed to be the most beautiful woman of her sort in Paris. Big man with the flat yellow face and no eyes is the Russian prince who is running her now. Mad about her, and awfully rich.



—She looks too stupid to be anything but good, said the little bride, seizing full advantage of her quite new right to «see life.» To-morrow night she would make that nice, clean-faced boy, her husband, take her to «do the mountain» ; to-night they were «doing» the Boulevards ; and last night she sat up in bed till all hours read-

ing yellow-covered books in preparation,—devotions before Mass. She stared now at La Glorieuse.

La Glorieuse turned her eyes away.

—I don't understand, she said again to the duke; married ten days, those pretty little, happy, young, good things, and they come here. Toni, I wonder in all Paris was there no quiet room with a fire and a big chair and a heap of cushions on the floor beside it?

—What are you talking about? said the Russian prince. You are deadly dull to-night, my beautiful.

The French prince yawned.

The duke smiled at La Glorieuse. He was ugly until he smiled. He said:

—Hear a story. Once upon a time there was a man so in love with his wife that he wanted to take her away from everybody and keep her all for himself. He had little fancies about a quiet room and firelight and a place at her feet. But she had fancies about a crowd at her feet, and much noise and glare. This is a true



story, my children, I know them both. She is a model of all the virtues, and none of the good and great can give a party without her. He has gone to the devil. Warning : if he had n't wanted such high things he might n't have gone down so far. He might have stopped midway, somewhere in a drawing-room. Never ask so much of the gods as a place at anybody's feet.

— What a stupid story, Toni ! yawned the French prince.

La Glorieuse put out both hands to the duke across the table, saying :

— Poor old Toni !

— Let's go on somewhere, broke in the Russian prince, somewhere more amusing.

— Toni, Toni ! said La Glorieuse, as if she did not hear the prince. Toni, I wish it were not all so queer. But thank you, one is less lonely.

She was not looking at the duke, but only wearily off into nothing. Her eyes were big and soft and dark, the ox eyes Homer gave his goddess.

— Come now, said the Russian prince, standing up.

As they passed out, the little bride turned quite around in her seat to stare at La Glorieuse, and said to the man beside her :

— I suppose all those women are perfectly horrid, are n't they ?

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## II

### LA GLORIEUSE

LA GLORIEUSE, coming out from her hôtel in the Parc Monceau to the winter morning, wore a plain dark dress and a heavy veil.

Marthe, her « lady of company, » followed her even to the street, crying, poor old fat Marthe, in a yellow satin dressing-gown and with curls conspicuously absent.

— Oh, you are a fool, a fool, she wailed for the hundredth time in an hour, for she knew very well what happened always on the days of those plain dark clothes. Oh, my angel, my little cabbage, what if the prince should discover ?

— Be still, said La Glorieuse ; fiche-moi la paix, chérie, the prince will not know unless you tell all Paris with your crying of it. And if he did know I should not care. Go back or I will never speak to you again.

— Fool, fool, wailed on Marthe, wringing her fat white hands.

La Glorieuse walked fast across the park toward Batignolles in the grey winter morning. It was a bad morning, cold and morne. The dampness hung over the vivid green grass in the park and clung to the black trunks of the trees. Most of the statues were covered with straw for the winter, and the flower-beds were empty of flowers. The wet earth smelt a little of country and some far-off life of the fields. There was no one about but the cantonnier in his blue blouse sweeping the drives.

La Glorieuse went out of the gate by the Rotunda and followed the Boulevard des Courcelles and the Boulevard des Batignolles. One knows the wide grey dulness of the quarter, the hurry, the unfriendliness. She walked faster and faster, going unseeingly, unhesitatingly, as the blind go by familiar ways. No one would have believed that the great Lady of Pleasure, to whom all things came, as vogue had come and the gifts of strange gods, could go so

eagerly to meet any happening. People turned to look after her because she was so splendid a creature, though if she had raised her veil no one would have known her face for the face of La Glorieuse.



Near the Place Clichy she turned down one of those colourless streets where life seems all a prosperous cold grey business, and, after a little, in at the door of an apartment house as

morne as the day and the street.

The concierge was driving a sick cat out of the court.

— You shall not find a hole here to die in, he said, hitting at it with his broom.

La Glorieuse ran up three flights of stairs so fast that at the top she had to stand for a minute, dizzy and breathing hard, before she could knock at the door where a printed card announced to a world not interested that Jean Michu was « Rédacteur en chef

du Qui Vive de Montmartre, journal périodique du peuple et par le peuple.» Over this card was pinned another on which was written in the big black scrawl of La Glorieuse herself, « Prière de ne pas faire de bruit. »

She knocked at the door softly, as if she were afraid. After a minute the door was opened by a young woman who would have been nice-looking and kindly but that her face was hardened with anger.

— Is he worse ? cried La Glorieuse. Oh, you have made him angry, and it is so bad for him ! Tell me, is he worse ? she whispered, looking nervously past the sick-nurse to the door of the next room.

— I cannot stand him, said the woman, whispering too. You will have to pay me more or I shall go. And you will get no other to stay with him. It is I who tell you.

La Glorieuse came in, throwing back her veil from her tense white face.

— I will give you anything you want, she said. I will manage somehow. Any-

thing. Only don't leave him. Oh, don't leave him.

—If you double my pay perhaps, said the woman, closing the door.

Both of them while they talked watched the door of the inner room. The outer room in which they stood was quite large, and evidently had been used as an office of some sort. A desk and some chairs had been pushed back against the walls to make place for the nurse's bed and dressing-table. A typewriter on the table between the windows was surrounded by a confusion of sick-room things.

La Glorieuse stood begging.

—You will stay with him, you will stay with him.

A man's voice, ugly and weak, called from the next room.

—Imbécile, who are you talking to? Who is there? Do you hear?

—It is only I, answered La Glorieuse; only I, mon grand. — She crossed the room quickly and opened the door. — May I come in?

— Well, Madame, the gutter princess, you have come at last, have you? Don't stand keeping the door open. God, it is cold! There, slam it, of course!

The room was disordered and cheerless. The fire had gone out, and it was bitterly cold. A tray of untouched breakfast stood on the table by the bed, in which lay a man to whom death was near. He was young, and he must once have been wonderfully good to look at, but now one saw the shadow of death, as of wings, across his face.

He lifted himself up in the bed and scowled at La Glorieuse.

— You've been long enough about coming, he said. Why did you trouble to come at all? If you had waited a little longer I should have been dead and you need not have climbed the stairs. You won't have to come here often again or pay your two sous much longer for this hole of a place. Why do you stand there gasping like a vieille rosse?

She came to him imploring.

— Don't, oh, don't, mon grand, you know

I could not help it. I tried so hard to come. I think of nothing else but coming here. Don't you know that, *mon grand*?

He began to cough terribly, and she stood not knowing what to do.

—The medicine, quick, give me the medicine. No, not that, the other, stupid!

She poured the medicine and held the glass for him to drink, her gloved hands trembling. She put her arms around him and held him up in the bed till the coughing ceased and he had strength enough to push her away.

—Have you brought money? he demanded.

—Oh, yes, yes, all I could get. I have nothing left that I dare sell. Forgive me that it isn't more. I could not ask him for more, it has been so much lately.

She poured out all the contents of her purse on the bed, and the man clawed over the half dozen or more gold pieces and the little heap of silver. She stood watching him.

—Bah, he said, not the price of the supper your prince gives you after the play.

— He swept the money off the coverlet and on to the floor. — Are you off now to drive your fine horses, or to buy new diamonds with what you did n't bring me?

— Oh, mon grand, you know...

— Then, if you are going to stay, for God's sake, make me comfortable. Your fool woman has gone off in a temper. Can't you take that food away?

It was droll enough to see La Glorieuse, whom men were proud to serve, tidy the room, rebuild the fire and make coffee for Jean Michu. His abuse of her and his dreadful coughing made her hands tremble and she did it badly. At last, propped up among the pillows, his coffee taken, he let her sit on the edge of the bed and hold his hand; he even called her his little Suzon, his old Suzon.

She knew it was then that she must tell him what she had to say. She had been planning for days and nights how to say it, quite definitely, without the nervousness which so annoyed him.

— I have come to stay with you. I am not going back to the prince. I will take



care of you. I will get work. The prince wants to take me south to-morrow, I cannot get him to put it off any longer. But I will not leave you.

Yet now, when the time had come to say it, she could not face his anger. It was so good to have him a little kind to her in the old way. She could not let go the moment of happiness. His hot dry hands lay in hers. He looked at her as if it really pleased him to look at her. He let her talk of the old days and the attic on Montmartre. He talked, coughing, of the great things he would have done if the world had not gone so wrong. He was not even angry that she did not understand. She never had understood, she, but she had always believed. And now her belief gave belief in himself to him, and he talked again of the great things he would yet do to show the world how wrong it had been. He made her take off her hat, and he touched her bright hair. He put his poor arms around her, drawing her down to kiss her.

Then she broke into sobbing. She had told herself she must not cry, he hated that, but all the plans she had made for the way of telling him failed her.

— Oh, let me stay with you, she sobbed, let me stay with you, — and fell on her knees, hiding her face in the bed-clothes. — Don't make me go away from you. He will take me away to-morrow. Don't make me go.

She had known he would be angry, but she had not known his anger would be so terrible a thing. She crouched shuddering now, as he stoned her with words.

Not go? Leave the prince? Lose the prince? How dare she come to him with such a thing to say? Break with the prince, — juste ciel, and who would give them money then? Who else would give her money without asking how she used it? Who would take her next when all Paris should say that the prince had tired of her, or that she had cheated him for an old lover of the gutter she had come from? Where would she go then, one would like to ask?

And who would keep him from starving then, he, Jean Michu, l'homme de génie, le grand réformateur de l'avenir?

— But we have money, she interrupted madly; so much money, all that in the bag. We could live, I would work.

From the shadow of death he raged at her. What bag of money? What did she know of a bag of money? Had she spied upon him? There was no bag of money. If she meant the wretched little sums she had given him from time to time, was she such a fool as not to know that that of course had been spent long ago for the bare needs of genius? It was not enough to have kept her in roses for a week, the gutter princess!

She tried to tell him that she wanted nothing, that soon she could earn enough for them both to live on. She knew she could. When she had been fifteen, he must remember, before the old marquis took her, she had made a franc a day at the modiste's. Did n't he remember how he used to meet her every night when she came out of the

shop in the Rue de la Paix, and she had always had money? Enough to go out to the country for Sundays — did n't he remember those days in the fields?

— Oh, mon grand, we might have days in the fields again. You would get well. I should take such care of you that you must get well. And one day we might go to live in the country where there were fields. I have thought of it so often, mon grand, all these years. I don't know how I could have lived if I had n't had that to think of. — She lifted her stained face from the blankets. — Mon grand, let's take the money from the bag only till I can make more.

He tried to strike her, but fell back coughing. She picked herself up from the floor and made him take his medicine, not daring to speak.

— Would you have me hate you? he gasped, when he could.

She could only stand there looking at him with her beautiful, loving, stupid eyes. There was never a stupider woman, surely, than La Glorieuse. The little American

bride of the other night in the restaurant would know how to manage her lovers, when she had them, better than that.

— Would you have me hate you? raged Jean Michu; so that I must drag myself out to die in the street rather than see you again?

She flung her hands out to him with a gesture that would have given the world to him, had she had it, instead of only her stupid, stupid hope.

— Then get the money, said the man; do you understand? Go now, even now he may be wondering where you are. Go, I tell you.

— But he will take me away to-morrow, said the woman, standing there; oh, I cannot, I cannot bear it.

— Don't begin that all over again. Pick up the money on the floor there, put it on the table. No, there, you fool, where I can reach it. Get me the bag from — no, no, no, I tell you, there is no bag of money under the mattress! Go away before you drive me mad. Put your hat on, you can-

not go bareheaded in the street. Now your veil. What a sight you are! Tell him you cried because you could not pay your dressmaker. Go, before I hate you.

She was trying blindly to find her things.

— Oh, mon grand, she said.

— Go, said the man; let him see how you've been crying, make him give you money for the dressmaker. Hurry. You can put your gloves on in the street. Tell him you have come from the dressmaker. Don't stand staring. Come and kiss me, and then go.

— But once you did, a little, love me, pleaded *La Glorieuse*, as she looked for the last time at Jean Michu.

### III

#### OF SIGHT-SEEING

THE little American bride was awfully angry when she realised who had taken her in to dinner at the Duchesse d'Alonsart's. She had met the duchess through Kitty de Stare, — Kitty Page, you know, who married so well over here, — and Kitty had been at the dinner too, and had seen who was taking her in, and — on purpose, she was sure, just to be horrid — had n't told her anything about him. Of course she had thought he was only a most boring man, all elbows, spectacles, and round shoulders, and when he had talked to her all through soup and fish about the Carlovingian ivories at the Louvre she had conclusively snubbed him, saying that one never went near those horrid big shops, left all that sort of thing to one's maid, do you see? Then afterwards she had found out that he was one of the most lionised men in Europe, member of

academies, director of museums, writer of books that every one absolutely had to have read, beside being heir to a title so great that it could n't even be mentioned in a republic.

— I know it was on purpose Kitty did n't tell me, said the little bride next day to her friend Molly ; she was jealous because Toni d'Alonsart made such a fuss over me.

— Are n't you going to pay her out ? said Molly, earnestly. It was rotten of her. — Molly used many English expressions because she had been presented in London the spring before and had had a great success. — Laura, you ought to pay her out jolly well.

— But how can I ? queried the little bride, not knowing she was indeed to « pay her out » later pretty thoroughly.

Said Molly, considering :

— We might go to see something and learn all about it, and then get Kitty before a crowd and talk about it, and make her talk the way she does, you know, when she thinks she's safe because other people don't



know, and then show her up,—I mean jolly well rag her.

So that was how they happened to go sight-seeing.

It was very difficult to find time, though they were both of them staying rather long in winter Paris, getting things for Pau or Cannes. But at last they arranged it. Laura's fitting at Cheruit's was for a quarter past one and would surely be finished by three. • Molly was lunching at the Ritz and could come over for her.

But Molly was late, and Laura was n't ready, so that it was after four when they came out into the greyness of the Place Vendôme.

—I ought to run over to Léontine's for a minute, said Laura, about that blue hat.

—No, you shan't, said Molly, pushing her into the auto-taxi. I have given up lots of things this afternoon to go with you, and I am going somewhere. It's for you I'm doing it anyway.

—Well, said Laura, in the auto-taxi, where do you want to go? It is no use



THEY CAME OUT INTO THE GREYNESS OF THE PLACE VENDÔME

going to the Louvre, because now we know they have other things there beside the pictures and that Venus, and we need n't go to the Luxembourg because we know about its being for modern painters, and I don't want to go to Notre Dame because I have been there. I don't see where else there is to go.

—There is a museum where they have war things, said Molly. *You* ought to go there, but I need n't because I went last year with my governess. There is a church I want to go to.

—Then tell him that, said Molly, as the *mécanicien* tucked the rug about her knees.

—But I have forgotten the name of it, said Molly. I say, Laura, let's go to the Palais de Glace.

—Nonsense, we could n't stay after five. You could n't, anyway, young girls simply *can't*, and even I could n't without a man.

—Oh, Laura that is just why. It would be ripping.

—But I could n't take you, Molly. You

might get your reputation ruined, and then nobody would be willing to marry you.

Which decided Molly. She was n't going to admit that reputation had anything to do with a man's being willing—willing indeed—to marry so pretty a girl as she. So she told the *mécanicien* to go to the Palais de Glace.

At the entrance Laura tried to hesitate.

— Suppose people spoke to us, Molly?

Molly walked boldly in. She knew enough of Paris to be more afraid that people would n't.

The ring was clammy cold, but the lights, the music, the whirl of it all, were brilliant, and the people skating, or standing about in the promenoir, or sitting at the tables round the ice were most wonderful people.

Laura and Molly, getting a table by the railing, ordered tea and waited for something to happen.

— It does n't seem so awful, said Molly.

— That's because you don't understand; a girl would n't, said the bride. My dear,

do look, quick! There's D'Alonsart skating with La Glorieuse!

— With who? said Molly, hopefully, leaning forward, her chinchilla muff on the railing.

— With La Glorieuse, one of the most chic of demi-mondaines. He was with her one night in a restaurant where we were. That was before he'd met me. He's awfully fascinating, so clever and ugly and smart and wicked. She is wonderful, isn't she? Where do you suppose those women get their clothes? We can't look like that, however we try.

— I wish he'd come and talk to us, said Molly. Why does n't he if he is so crazy about you?

— He can't, when he's been talking to that sort of woman. You ought to know better, Molly.

— I don't care who he's been talking to. It's too stupid here. Laura, nobody has spoken to us.

— Everybody stares at us, said Laura, consolingly.

— Tell me what is so bad about it, Laura? Why is it worse than lots of places where we *can* go?

Laura said one could n't explain to a girl.

Over tea and cakes, they watched the dizzy whirling past of everything and wondered why nothing happened. They knew they were pretty and had pretty clothes, and that people noticed them.

— Suppose I dropped my violets, Laura, and some man picked them up?

— Oh, Molly, you must n't! said Laura, rather wishing that Molly would, none the less.

— We might just look as if we should n't mind, Laura; let's just look at those men there standing in the passage behind you.

Molly did not hear one of those men saying to the other just then:

— But it's droll, American girls can do anything. For example, those two, one can see in a minute their whole little silly innocent story.

But Laura heard and blushed furiously.

— Let's go home, she said, standing up.

Molly was staring, fascinated, across the ring, her lips apart and her eyes round. Laura's eyes followed hers and stared too.

Afterwards they both felt it to have been a lost opportunity. Molly, for her part, might have said, « My poor darling, don't look,» or, « Be brave, dearest, contröol yourself,» or even « God help you, dear,» and taken Laura by the hand and mercifully led her away. Laura might have saved the situation by seizing Molly's arm and saying quickly: « Come before we see the creature who has beguiled him here.» But at the time neither of them thought of any such interesting thing to do or say. They only stared.

There, across the ring, sitting alone before a whiskey and soda, most sadly out of place, self-conscious and ill at ease, was the big clean American boy who was the husband of Laura. The Frenchman might have seen of him too, in a minute, the whole little silly innocent story.

A pretty girl, laughing, as she swung by in a waltz, tapped his cheek. He drew back and blushed, not knowing where to look, then tried to grin like a devil of a fellow.

—Come, let's go before he sees us, said Laura. Oh dear, I did think he'd be a little more in things than that.

She gathered up her furs and pushed through the crowd in the promenade. Molly followed close behind her, turning back as they went to look over her shoulder.

It was hateful of Molly, Laura thought, to look back at so mortifying a thing. Now if only Bobby had been skating with La Glorieuse. If this were how it felt to discover that one's husband was only a green school-boy!

—Molly, don't you dare tell Kitty about our seeing Bobby. Ugh, what a stupid place! she said.

Then, rapturously:

—But look, Molly, look at their wonderful old great man!

The sight-seeing was not a failure, after



all, for at that moment they saw the great man of academics, museums, books, and titles receive a sound box on the ear from a fluffy girl before whom he knelt, spectacled and giggling, to buckle on her skates.



## IV

### OF A LESSON

—THEN, if you did not mean that by coming here like this to meet me, said D'Alonsart, what did you mean?

He stood between Laura and the door of a pretty little salon.

She leant against the wall farthest from him, afraid for the first time in her twenty years.

—If you do not love me, went on the duke, why are you here? You would like to reach the bell, would n't you, and tell the servants. You might open the window there and call to the people in the street and tell them why you are here.

—I did not mean, began Laura.

But he came nearer to her, catching her wrists and holding her.

—Don't you suppose that I understand? You think it chic to have an affair, a little intrigue; very chic, little signs and whispers

for a man, walks with him where you won't be seen, tea with him where you won't be seen, a meeting with him in an apartment where you won't be seen, where you can come in a mysterious cloak and veil, and let him make love to you just so far, only just so far, and go away pleased to think yourself very fascinating, very mysterious, and perfectly safe. Bah! I will teach you a lesson in this hour that your stupid decent Bobby couldn't teach in a lifetime.

She swung herself from side to side, trying to get away from him, and he laughed down at her.

—Scream, he said; and if people come, tell them that you did not mean what those other women mean in coming here. You did n't mean anything horrid, like love, or the need of a handful of louis. You only meant to have a little adventure you could hide from your husband and hint at darkly to your best friends. You only meant to make a man love you. If it hurt him, if it hurt your Bobby, so much the more exciting. To give him just as much as you

safely could, but no more, not enough to make danger for yourself. Yourself! Bah!

He dropped her hands suddenly, as if he did not like the touch of them.

She stood trying to speak, to think.

He half turned from her, then came back and looked at her long without speaking. She could understand nothing of what was in his face.

—You thought you could take care of yourself, he said at last; and keep yourself quite safe. But you cannot. You thought you could give this and hold back that. But I can take everything you have. Think how much you have to lose, little bride. There are few people in all the world who have as much to lose as you.

He went to the writing-table, arranging pen and ink and paper. Presently he said:

—Sit here and write what I tell you.

—I will not, she protested, with half courage.

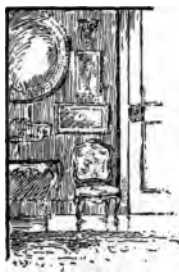
He came a little nearer, smiling at her,

with a look that somehow made her go to the table quickly and sit down before it.

He took the pen, dipped it in the ink, and gave it to her.

—Write what I tell you, he said behind her, looking over her shoulder, and she wrote :

« Dear Bob, I am in an apartment of the Duc d'Alonsart in the Rue de la Boétie.



I do not know what D'Alonsart is going to do with me, but I am afraid to go back to you. Perhaps you will come here for me. D'Alonsart hopes that you will. He would like to tell you some things. But he says you need not hurry, because he is going to teach me a lesson.»

—Sign it, said D'Alonsart.

—He will kill you, she cried; he will come here and kill you.

—There are two more short notes for you to write, said D'Alonsart, taking no notice of what she had said, one to your friend Miss Molly, and one to a lady com-

only called La Glorieuse. Address that to Beaulieu. To her you need only write a line; say, « I wonder how *you* began? » To Miss Molly at Cannes the letter must be a little longer; tell her that those other women are not so very different, after all, you find, and that . . . Dear me, how ugly you are when you cry! I really cannot endure it, you may leave the last two letters until later.

He took the letter to Bob and sealed it.

— I will ring for a messenger to take it, he said. If you have anything to say to the man who answers the bell, you had better put down your veil, he might recognise you.

He turned toward the bell.

Then Laura did the most dramatic thing she had ever done in all her little pose of a life. She flung herself down in a heap on the floor and sobbed at D'Alonsart's feet.

He stood quite still, holding the letter, and waited, and when her sobbing was a little quieter, said:

— Once before a woman cried in this

room. It was the great lady they call La Glorieuse. I do not know why she cried, I think it was just because she was deadly tired. And once I brought a girl here for no other reason than that she cried when I asked her to share my supper in one of those restaurants you find so amusing. Why should you make a tragic muse of yourself there on the floor?

As he spoke, his mood changed. Something savage came over him. He took her by the shoulders, lifting her up from the floor, and held her at arms' length, looking at her.

— You thought I would send that letter? You poor silly bad child !

He put it into her hand.

— Take it, he said ; tear it or burn it, you will have to remember it always, every wretched word of it. Now go. For me, I do not care ever to see you again.

## V

### HIC JACET

HOW it would have annoyed Madame la Duchesse d'Alonsart to know that even in only a dream of her she trailed her skirts through such a den as that where Toni lay in a berth sleeping. Imagine her seen so, through the yellow smoke, — or was it blue or grey? — in one of those places where men of Toni's world went in their strange quest of pleasure deep down to the mud at the roots of the flowers of life.

In Toni's dreams of her the duchess was kind. It would indeed have been so easy for her to be kind in the life outside the dreams. She need only have said, « Poor old Toni, » as La Glorieuse had said it, and hold out her hands.

Oh, la la...

But she was away still with her English friend, Lady Somebody, at Cairo, and Toni was alone with the ghosts in the old hôtel





WITH THE GHOSTS IN THE OLD HÔTEL NEAR  
STE. CLOTILDE

near Ste. Clotilde. He was rarely now in the houses of his world, though its people made much of him when he came, and even talked a little of him when he went, saying, « Poor old Toni ! » Nor was he often in the houses of glass, where, as a matter of fact, they talked rather more of poor old Toni.

In the houses of glass too they wondered what had become of La Glorieuse. Her Russian prince was seen often, but she never, and he would not speak of her.

One night, the prince and Toni had supper together somewhere, chancing to meet, and, oddly enough, the Americans of that other night were at a neighbouring table. A Frenchman with them, De Stare, who had married an American, Kitty Page, you know, a friend of Laura's, seemed very devoted to the little bride, — Kitty was being « paid out, » — and Bobby, the big boy husband, looked most forlorn.

— One sees how it all goes, remarked Toni.

— Pigs, women, growled the prince, taking his cutlet up in his fingers. Suzon was better than most. I believe her. She said it was n't me, but the life, that she could n't stand. Said she was leaving not me only, but all of it, for always. Would n't keep the jewels or take a sou. Said she really liked me. There was something queer about it all, do you know. Toni?

— Yes, said Toni, and began to talk of other things, for he knew more about La Glorieuse than he cared to tell the prince. He had had two letters from her. He thought often of these letters, for they had shown him a thing that seemed queer, as the prince had said, even in the queerness of all things.

One of the letters, which had come to him from Beaulieu in midwinter, had asked him to go to a house in Batignolles to see a man called Michu, and write of him to her. It was rather a desperate letter.

« Toni, how can I enough implore you? Whatever happens, don't be angry with him,

and do anything he wants, Toni. And let me know quickly.»

Toni had gone, but the man had been dead for days; there had been only that to write to her.

In the early spring another letter came, written in Paris, but without address. La Glorieuse wanted to thank him; she had not done it before because she could not write. She wanted him to know that she had left the prince, and all that.

« Only I wish you would think of me sometimes, I should be less lonely if I thought you did. I will not give you my address, because you might think you had to do something for me, and there is nothing to do. I would have gone to live in the country, but I could not bear it now. I used to plan it once. I work for a fabrique de fleurs artificielles, and I do not need anything, except to believe that some one thinks of me sometimes a little kindly. You are the only one who ever thought of me in that way, and so I write.»

The letter seemed to Toni, remembering

it in the house of glass, tragic enough to be funny, and perhaps it was the best memory one could keep of him.

The little American bride kept her special memory of him quite to herself, bowing to him coldly when they met, and saying that really one scarcely cared to speak to him now.

She was very busy, the little bride, in these spring days in Paris: nine fittings a day, my dear, and nothing ever right; and that little dressmaker Clarisse d'Alonsart told her about, where only French people go, the most awful failure, you know; and they none of them ever send anything home. And the hats this year are perfectly hideous. And Bobby won't go to the play because he does n't understand. And Frenchmen do say such fascinating things to one, and American men are so unreasonable about it. And was n't it too bad about D'Alonsart?

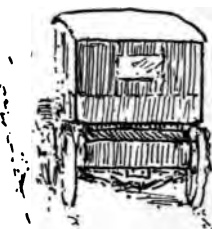
## ELEVEN VENTURES



## DO YOU SEE, MY DEAR?

ALICE, the charming Marquise de Marvern, and her very smart old husband were walking, as they walked every morning of the season, in the Avenue de la Reine Marguerite, with the motor following at a crawl, and Harris a few respectful English steps behind, carrying the wraps and guarding the little dogs.

The marquis was telling one of his long stories, saying, « Do you see, my dear ? » with every other sentence. The way he had of saying that, meaninglessly and always, was one of the little things that seemed to Alice to be driving her mad. It seemed to her on this horrible morning that she could have endured everything, — his slow step, his unceasingly courteous conversation,





the panting of the automobile behind them, the correct presence of Harris, the yelping of the little dogs, even the beating of the wretched thoughts in her own brain,—if only he would n't have said, « Do you see, my dear ? »

It was an exquisite spring day. The Bois was full of lilac and acacia bloom, black-birds and thrushes, and pretty women, automobiles, and fine horses with clinking harnesses.

Everyone was there. The Marverns must always be stopping to speak to somebody. The marquis's story was always being interrupted and always taken up again ; but the things people said to her, the things she had to say to them, were always broken in upon by the refrain that Alice's thoughts beat out like little hot hammers in her own brain, every reiteration a pain, distinct and separate, almost physical :

« Philippe never loved me, never loved me, never loved me... »

— Yes, everyone is in town now. Yes, I know the D'Arbelles are back. No, I have

not seen Philippe since his marriage. Yes, I hear he adores her...

« He never loved me, never loved me... »  
Was she saying it aloud? Why would they all insist on talking of him? Was it because they all *knew*? Could they hear the hammering thoughts?

— Yes, they say she is charming. No, I have not met her. Yes, very likely they are here this morning. Yes, everyone knows he is quite mad about her.

« He never loved me, never loved me... »  
She was trying to realise that at any minute she might come face to face with him, and the bride he so adored, here before all these people. She was trying to understand that she must not faint or cry out, that she must not let anyone see. And this was only the beginning of it. She would be meeting him, meeting *them*, always now, everywhere, before everybody, as they all went round and round like goldfish in their globe. And she must never let him see. She was trying to dull herself by suffering to suffering, as though when the pain were

past bearing she might grow numb of it :

« He never loved me, never loved me...»

The marquis was saying :

— And then — do you see, my dear? — the policeman took her by the arm and put her out, and one would have thought that would have finished her, but not at all...

« Never loved me...»

— She simply went round to the stage door, and said he had sent for her to come to his dressing-room.

« Never loved me, never loved me, never loved me...»

And then the dreadful meeting came. One moment there was the coming and going of people all about her, the next only Philippe. She was looking straight at Philippe and at his bride, so cruelly happy and pretty and young. Her own eyes, that gave everything she had to him, met Philippe's eyes, that gave nothing, that had never given anything, had demanded only. She could not have told why she did not cry out to him while all the world heard, or

fall on her knees to him while all the world saw. In reality she only nodded and smiled, and it was over. But only for this time. It would come again, over and over again, as they went round in the goldfish globe.

— So of course, do you see, my dear? said her husband, they let her pass, and when she came to his dressing-room door... Alice, I will go on talking as if nothing had happened, and you must try to listen. Do you see, my dear? Because people are watching us. I am so sorry, I have always been so sorry. Did you think I had n't known?

It seemed to Alice that she was falling and the marquis was holding out his frail hand to her.

— Do you see, my dear? If I could have helped you by dying, I would have done so, I was so sorry.

— But, Gérard, it was... How can you... If you know what it was?

The marquis said :

— I am so sorry that they gave you to an old man like me, do you see, my dear?

I am sorry a man like D'Arbelle came into your life. For a time I thought it might have helped to have me dead and out of the way. Then I saw that it would only make things worse ; that some day you might — do you see, my dear ? — have need of me, be even glad to turn to me.

He spoke so quietly as they walked that nobody passing by, not even Harris close behind, could have known he was leaving his story unfinished.

— Perhaps now, for a time, till this is past, as all things pass, — do you see, my dear ? — you may be a little glad to have me.

— Oh, Gérard, do you care like that ?

— Yes, he said.

— But I am not worth it, Gérard. Gérard, you are a fool, a fool.

— I am glad to be a fool for you, said the marquis. Do you see, my dear ?



## FORTUNE'S YELLOW

FROM the soft sunshine and fragrance of her father's rose garden terraced on the hill-side above Ventimiglia, where she had been overworked, underfed, kicked, and beaten throughout her fifteen years of life, from the midst of a great mass of those roses they call Fortune's Yellow, Maria Pia came to Paris.

She went down one spring day, quite as usual, with her father and Pasquale the donkey, into Ventimiglia to send off to Germany a large order for the roses.

Both she and Pasquale were loaded heavily with the overflowing panniers of Pasquale,



who was a very small donkey; one saw nothing under the baskets but four clever little black feet tapping the stony path and two big ears above his fuzzy face. Maria Pia carried a basket on her head and another strapped on her back. Her father carried nothing but a stick, with which he beat such parts as were available of Pasquale. He would have liked to beat also Maria Pia, because he liked to hurt things, and because he knew that she was afraid, deadly afraid, of his crooked eyes. He would have liked her to be afraid of his hands too, but, since Maria Pia had grown so tall and beautiful, people were apt to treat him unpleasantly if they saw him beat her. If he had known that at that moment all the money he had hidden from time to time in various hiding-places about the house was sewed in a little bag around the neck of Maria Pia, he would most certainly have killed her. Perhaps it would have been better for Maria Pia. But he did not know. So Maria Pia came to Paris.

When her father had seen to the sending off of the roses and had left her to wait with

Pasquale in the street while he went to the caffè, Maria Pia did what she had for some time been planning to do.

It was harder to do than she had thought it would be, because she hated to say good-bye to Pasquale. She knew he would have nobody to be kind to him when she was gone, and she thought his little face looked more anxious than ever as she made the sign of the cross upon him and kissed him between his tall ears. She could have stayed with Pasquale all her life to be, like him, overworked, underfed, kicked, and beaten, if it had not been for the fear of her father's crooked eyes. She knew that her father could make things die, animals and people and even the roses in his neighbour's garden, by just looking at them with those crooked eyes. He had only to look at them, and after a while they would die, slowly, as if for no reason. The neighbour, an old woman who was kind, had given Maria Pia a little coral horn to wear against the evil eye. This Maria Pia would have liked to give now to Pasquale, but there was no way of



his wearing it that her father could not see. So all she could do was to make the sign of the cross upon him and kiss him good-bye.

Then she went to the station and bought a third-class ticket for Paris.

Curled up in the corner of the third-class carriage, she slept all night, with nothing to disturb her. Now that she had escaped her father she need fear no future. She knew she was beautiful, and she would dance and sing in the piazze of Paris, for Paris was a very great city, full of rich and generous people. She had learned, even in the streets of Ventimiglia, that one who is beautiful can get a living from the world easily enough.

Maria Pia slept without fear in her dreams. But her dreams were all of one thing. Perhaps because all the day before she had been picking those gold roses, she dreamed of them, masses of them, flung at her feet for her to tread on, a gold carpet for her, heaped around her to make soft couches for her, piled up in golden walls about her to make a golden palace for her. She dreamed

this over and over. But in the moment before waking the dreams turned horrible. She dreamed that she was being buried, suffocating, in the gold roses; that they were heaped upon her, covering her and crushing her down,—the more cruel a death for her in that they made so soft and sweet a grave. So fear came into her dreams.

Fear was also with Maria Pia in the moment of arrival in Paris. The station was confusing, and the little round chin of Maria Pia trembled, the great dark eyes of Maria Pia were tearful, as she slipped her hand into the hand of quite the finest gentleman on the platform, asking him, border French lovely on her lovely lips:

—S' v' plait, M'sieur, what does one do to start oneself in the life of pleasure?

. . . . .

It was not more than a year, time as well not dwelt upon, between the arrival at the Gare de Lyon and the days when fortune began to fling its yellow at the feet of Maria Pia.

The man who took Maria Pia from the

music halls and made her greater than a princess said to her:

— You strange thing, you child, you priestess, you little panther, you Vice of the World and the Ages, you saint that might have been, you amuse me. I will make you the fashion of Paris.

That he did. But he made her something more too.

Maria Pia loved him. She had n't the vaguest idea what was meant by all the names he called her, but she loved him like the « strange thing, » he had said she was. Poor little strange thing! She was sixteen years old. Her love was born out of a horrible knowledge, which the man, who really was a quite great person in the world, at first thought made it an amusing love, bizarre in the little strange thing, and chic. But soon he found that these were hardly the words to describe the love of Maria Pia.

It was the simplest, the most savage, the most intense and generous love ever given by child or courtesan in the world. It was the sort of love that should have been a

rose for Maria Pia to wear on her heart, and not a scarlet stain...

Maria Pia now had the smartest imaginable little shoes, she who used to run barefoot about the garden paths, shoes that had buckles of real diamonds, but that hurt the feet of Maria Pia.

Maria Pia had the finest silk stockings, and the most wonderful things of batiste and lace and ribbon; she had a maid who knew how to lace her little satin corsets. With contempt inexpressible for a mistress who never had looked at the back of her head in two mirrors, her maid would play upon those mysterious silken strings.

Maria Pia had dresses that were like the flowers of the garden. Anybody but the magnificent maid (who never had expected to come to this) would have been proud of her in the gold-yellow dress that was the talk of Paris.

Never had any princess such jewels as had Maria Pia of the rose garden. The Grand Monsieur who came twice a day to dress her riotous hair felt that indeed life

was worth living when he twisted yellow sapphires through the dark curls.

The hands of Maria Pia were like little brown butterflies, fragile and lovely. But she could not manage her knife and fork. At first she only thought it was fun that she could n't, because the Prince of her Fairy Tale used to take her hands in his two hands and kiss them as he gave them lessons. But there came a day when she cried at her own table because her own footman stared at her when she used the wrong fork for fish.

The border French that was like music on such lips as Maria Pia's amused the man who was making her greater than a princess, but nevertheless she must learn to speak correctly. She must have lessons, she must read many books, she must write exercises.

And so one saw beautiful Maria Pia dressed in beautiful things, sitting at a table, her feet twisted around the legs of her chair, her fingers inky, her back bent painfully, her head on one side, struggling with those exercises.

—You beautiful thing, said the Prince of her Fairy Tale, coming upon her so and laughing with delight, is it absolutely necessary to put out your little pink tongue every time you make the tail of a *y*?

Maria Pia worked hard, for she wanted to please her Prince, she wanted him to be proud of her; she wanted to be able to talk to him as a real princess might. She worked at this building up of knowledge as her forefathers had worked at the terracing of their hills. Indeed it was a working with stones, a piling up, a fitting in of heaviness upon heaviness, the more done, the more found yet to do, with never any getting to the end of it. Though Maria Pia worked hard terracing up the mountains of things she ought to know, all the things crumbled down with forgetting as fast almost as she built them up. She tried again and again to make things stay remembered, but there was so much to learn, and to learn all at once, that she grew confused and tired, and cried over the rules of the subjunctive case as over the mystery of the fish fork.

— Your sisters know all about all the forks? she asked one day of her Prince, who laughed very much, not knowing that it was the beginning of the end.

— Your sisters can talk to men about pictures and books and travel and music and all those things? she asked, another time, when they came home one night from supper where many men had talked to her, but not of those things.

And a few days after, she demanded, as he was telling her how beautiful she was :

— Your sisters can talk with you, can't they, really talk of things? You can talk with them of all those things? You do not have to tell them how beautiful they are?

— Please, he said, a little coldly, we will not speak so much of my sisters.

At that she made a scene of sobbing so terrible that he was too frightened even to care whether the servants should hear her or not. It was the strangest jealousy he had ever seen, and the most passionate.

— I hate to be beautiful, sobbed Maria

Pia, I hate you to tell me that I am beautiful. I hate your sisters and books, and knowing about things and how to do things, and, oh, I hate, hate, hate the way you love me!

It was the only scene she had ever made, and he so nearly understood it that afterwards he never laughed at her nor at himself and the absurd picture he knew he made hearing her lessons, making her read aloud, or talking to her as if she were one of his plain clever sisters. Certainly he had not meant to love her so. He had meant her to be just a luxury, the indulgence of a mood.

Perhaps that is all it would have come to if it had gone on. He might some day have tired of her inky little fingers and the pink tongue that superintended the flourishes of the *y*'s. He might have tired some day of defending her from the eyes of those superior beings the servants. He might have tired even of showing her beauty at its best advantage in the round of life that made up his world. He was a man who



.....  
had tired of many things before, and very probably he would have tired in time too of Maria Pia.

However there was no time, for Maria Pia died.

It was two years after her coming to Paris, in the time of Fortune's Yellow.

She was seventeen.

Her fairy-tale Prince had been obliged to go away from her for a little while and it happened then.

The Prince was worried about leaving her, had thought she did not seem well. He had had the greatest doctors of Paris in to see her, who all said she was run down, that she must take tonics and be amused. Not one of them knew enough to tell her that she must run bareheaded and barefooted in a sunny rose garden, eat bread and cheese, and sleep from dark to sunrise. She pretended to take the doctors' tonics, but she did not really take them, for they were quite nasty.

The Prince gave all his time and thought to amusing her. Everything she wanted she

could have, yet everything she had seemed to hurt her. She must have beautiful books and her rooms were full of them ; but the Prince would find her crying over them because her head ached so from trying to read them all. She had beautiful pictures, but she would be very wretched because those she liked best were never those she ought to have liked. She must have the most beautiful clothes, and then they tortured her because she did not know how to wear them. There seemed to be some thorn, a *malia*, in each thing his wealth was lavishing upon her.

She would not wear her jewels. « They have the Evil Eye, » she would say, and her hands would turn as cold as ice. That was after the middle of the winter, when they were in Egypt, and she had lost the little coral horn that she had worn all her life. It had vanished away somehow from the company of the yellow sapphires and she was wild with fright. She told her Prince about it, saying things he did not at all understand and so only laughed at. She told him that people in Ventimiglia had said her

father had the Evil Eye, that she knew he had, that now she had lost her coral horn he would kill her, even from way off there in Ventimiglia. She had seen him make a little wax doll once and stick it full of pins and set it to melt in the sun. The doll had been named for an enemy, and as it melted the enemy died. So her father would kill her, now the coral horn was gone. There were many more coral horns to be had in the world, but it was of no use; the sign had been given. Her prince laughed at her, but that did no good. Then he tried scolding her as he never had scolded her before, but she did not cry. Perhaps if she had cried then, her whole little story would have been different.

The very day they came back to Paris, as they drove up to the apartment, a little hunchback beggarwoman, una gobba, ran to open the carriage door. Every Italian knows that a hunchback man brings good luck, but a hunchback woman luck of the very worst. Every Italian would understand the deadly fear that laid hold on the

heart of Maria Pia, though she did not tell her Prince because she was afraid of another scolding.

There was another thing she did not tell her Prince. When he explained to her very gently that he must leave her for a little while, because he had to take his youngest sister, who was ill, away to the country, she did not tell him that she knew when she said good-bye to him it would be for the last time. She knew it. But she only smiled at him, saying he must think of her sometimes.

He was glad, because he did not understand, that she made no scene when the last minute came. She did not even cry, poor little tall Maria Pia!

Of course it was good, one should feel it so, that the world should be rid of a Maria Pia, and yet it was a little sad that the Prince of her Fairy Tale had to go away just then. He said good-bye to Maria Pia in the big beautiful room where she seemed so lonely a little thing, and she stood at the window watching him go away through the spring greenness of the Avenue du Bois.

It was a beautiful room, full of beautiful things, but when Maria Pia turned back from the window it seemed very cruel to her, very large and silent, and horribly empty of life. All the other rooms in the apartment were the same: Maria Pia had no little place of refuge from her fears.

Out of doors she was even more afraid. Perhaps if the coachman and footman had not been such splendid persons she might have gone to drive sometimes. Or if it had not been for the carriage at all she might have taken a tram somewhere and found a place with grass and violets, or even a garden with gold roses.

Flowers came to her every day from her Prince, but they were such strange and wonderful flowers from the hothouses that she was afraid of them as of the jewels. She looked on them as alien things and full of enmity for her.

Letters came to her every day from her Prince, and she read each one over countless times. She wrote to him, working hard over her letters, writing each one over

and over that there might be no mistakes. Sometimes she spent the whole day on one letter, and grew so nervous that she could not spell the simplest words or keep the lines even. Every day came to her beautiful things that her Prince had ordered sent to her, — books, pictures, jewels. But they seemed somehow a part of a confused dream. Sometimes it seemed to her that they came from one who was dead. Then she began to feel so about the letters too, as if his going out of her life had meant that he was dead, and even the letters were dreadful to her.

The great rooms, empty of life, seemed full of death. Once she begged the maid to stay a little and talk to her. But the maid was a respectable person who felt herself demeaned in the service of a Maria Pia ; she would do what her service required of her, but no more.

She did what her service required of her so well that her very way of doing it was cruel to Maria Pia. Sometimes it seemed to Maria Pia that if the maid had not got

out her things for her with such an air of being herself far more worthy to wear them, she could perhaps have dressed and gone out to find some friendliness just in the spring and the sunshine.

She might have eaten something if there had not been two men always to bring it to her. She might have slept if she could have just flung herself down on a pile of something in a dark corner that smelled of cheese and Pasquale and roses.



She might not have died if, the night she broke the mirror, she could have run crying to the hut of the nearest neighbour.

As it was, she spent the night crouching on the floor in the hall outside the maid's door. She did not dare to call the maid. Two or three times in the night she put up her hand and tried to open the door. She thought that perhaps she could get it only a crack open, noiselessly, without disturbing the maid, just to feel that some-

one alive was nearer. But the door was locked.

After a while she must have slept a little, for she dreamed. She dreamed of women. It means dreadful things to dream of women. Maria Pia dreamed of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of women, all the women of the world and the ages who wear scarlet stains on their hearts. All the women were struggling for gold roses, struggling with one another. She saw their white arms toss in the air. Some of them gathered gold roses. Some of them fell and were trampled. Then she saw herself with the gold roses flung all about her, heaping up, heaping up, to make the palace of a princess for her, to fall upon her and bring death to her.

Next day she could not at all manage her letter to her Prince. Nor could she the day after that. Nor ever again.

The Prince, not hearing from her for five days, grew frightened, and made some excuse to the youngest sister to come back to Paris.

But Maria Pia was dead. She had died



that morning, the servants had telegraphed. They had got in a doctor, but the doctor could do nothing, he said. He did not know of what she was ill nor why she died, the doctor.

## OF PARIS AND MISS DOW

IT was the end of Miss Dow's last day in Paris. It was in August, a white hot day, breathless, with dust like mist through all the city.

Next morning Miss Dow, Miss Selma B. Dow, was to take the steamer train and the « Blücher » for Bolton, Steuben County, U. S. A., for the room on Main Street, the Normal School, and the necessity of making Bolton's extreme youth write things with chalk on the blackboard.

Miss Dow had been « abroad » for five weeks. She had been saving the money for her « trip » ten years. Before that, in her mother's lifetime, she had not been able to save, or even to think of saving. It had taken ten years, because the salary of a teacher in the Bolton Primary is not excessive, and her brother's children had needed many nice little extra things that their father

could not give them. They would be needing even more nice little things now that they were growing up. She could never again allow herself the selfishness of saving. There would never be another five weeks.

Miss Dow was thirty and thin, wore eye-glasses, a brown serge dress, and an Alpine hat, had a high forehead and straight hair, and carried her Baedeker wherever she went.

But since she had been in Paris she had never opened the Baedeker. She who had planned a trip for these five weeks through Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Holland, and Belgium had never got beyond this Paris to which her steamer train had brought her.

Her «steamer trunk» and «dress-suit case,» after spending six hours in the pension recommended by the minister's sister, had been translated thence to a place most extraordinarily alien to their previous habits and associations. The «steamer trunk» stood on a carpet stained with years of paint and turpentine and «to your healths all.» A wall of exquisite wood panelling, once cream white, where lovely naughty little

painted cupids kissed each other through trailed rose garlands, enshrined Miss Dow and her belongings. The « dress-suit case » reposed on the top of an armoire, in the company of more cupids and garlands, carved of wood of the colour of old wine. Out of the



window one saw the Seine, with its « cargaisons de bois, de houille et de cadavres, » the greenness of the trees in the Halle aux Vins, the soft yellow walls and blue roofs of houses on the quai de la Tournelle opposite, the dome of the Pantheon floating above them, and obliquely, down the river, the great apse and flying buttresses of Notre Dame, the high sharp roofs, the slim spire, the two towers against the sky.

For Miss Dow, arriving in Paris on a

rose-gold morning, when the pension in the rue Marbeuf seemed an insult to human intelligence, had fled for a walk, and following the river had stopped and stayed at the sign « To let » hung out of that shabby, disreputable, wonderful window on the quai of the Île St. Louis.

From that window, from that Paris she had discovered for herself, that was her own utterly, how could she go away? How could she take her eyes, dazed, enchanted, behind the prim glasses, for even a minute from the wonderful beauty of those five weeks to look into any book in the world?

A drunkenness, ivresse, ebrezza, — why is there no such lovely word in English for it? — had come upon her, Miss Dow of Bolton, U. S. A. For five weeks she had known what it meant to « swim in wine, » in purple and golden and ruby wine. Now it was over.

She had spent her last morning in the Cluny, wandering through the dusty sunshine and velvet shadows of the old lovely rooms, quite lost in the lavishness of beauti-

ful things. She had eaten, or had left uneaten, her last noon breakfast at her own little red and white covered table on the terrace of the café of the Chat qui Pêche, close under the mellow beauty of the church of St. Séverin. She had spent her last afternoon in the Musée du Louvre, — the rooms of the old masters, — dreaming over things great dead people still say even to little elderly souls in brown serge. She had fed the sparrows for the last time among the orange trees and statues and singing fountains of the Tuileries Gardens. She had taken her last tea at a crêmerie where one looks on all the coming and going of the Boul' Mich'; had been to Benediction for the last time at St. Germain des Prés, and from the quai had watched her last sunset kindle the windows and turn the dust haze to a pillar of fire. She had watched her last Paris night gather its soft purple



around the city. She had quite forgotten her last dinner. And now she had been standing, she did n't know how long, on the Pont de la Tournelle, watching for the last time the gold of the city's lights casting strange reflections in the river, the long quivers and trails, the broken circles and the moving shadows.

This was the very end.

She had looked forward for ten years to five weeks. Now there would be only the looking back. Looking back! — from the squeaky rocking-chair in the room on Main Street; across the flat desk in the Primary Department of the Normal School; beyond the range of the two microscopes that were the eyes of the minister's sister. Looking back, not through ten years, but twenty, thirty, forty, all of them thin, brown, timid years, exactly alike. How could one bear it who had known five weeks of purple and gold and ruby?

She leant far over the parapet, and saw the lights of the city reel in the twinkling water. Then someone caught her arm, dragging her back sharply, crying :

— Mon Dieu, que faites-vous là ?

Miss Dow looked dully into the eyes of a slouchy man who stared at her, and said :

— Qu'alliez-vous faire ?

— I... I don't know, said Miss Dow, in English ; I think I was only looking over.

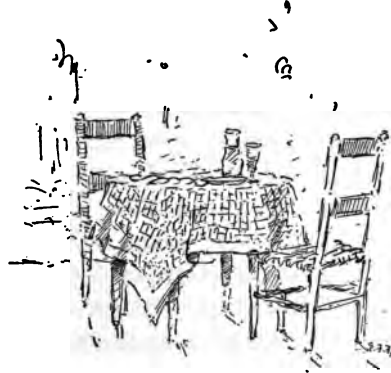
The man could not understand what she said, but she could understand of his answer that he had thought she meant to kill herself. They looked at each other for a long strange minute. Then she said, « Merci, Monsieur, » with a number of *r*'s like a good American, and turning, went away quickly.

She seemed such a commonplace unadventurous little thing that he must have thought he had been mistaken, for he let her go, watching her as she went, over the bridge and up the quiet old half-lighted quai.

She went quite soberly home. Tomorrow she would realise that « home » was Bolton, U. S. A. Already that was beginning to seem real again, this a dream, as if already she had turned from the river, full



of mad lights, back to the blackboard. She entered for the last time the wide doorway with the prince's arms carved above it, crossed the court where the stars looked



down on the concierge's lamp, and starlight and lamplight together made the old palace glow with loveliness again. She climbed for the last time the prince's staircase to her shabby room, and that window looking over her Paris of strange moods.

The concierge's wife, thinking she looked tired, brought milk to her, and Miss Dow drank it. She also ate a croissant, and

packed her « steamer trunk » and « dress-suit case » most neatly, thinking and thinking...

Many people threw themselves into the river, for many reasons,— because of pain or poverty or sin or love, but never, surely, because of a rocking-chair and a school-room desk and the eyes of the minister's sister.

So perhaps the little story of Miss Selma B. Dow is not even a tragedy.

## BEGINNERS

**KNOCKING** on the door brought no answer, so after a minute De Marne opened it and entered.

The room, Kate's own little salon, was full of firelight and twilight, soft colours and the odour of violets. Kate was kneeling on the rug before the fire reading a letter. She had been burning letters; there were black films of burnt paper in the logs,



and there was a little pile of letters on the rug beside her. She was crying and she had not heard the sound of the opening door.

De Marne had time, in the queer vivid moment before he spoke to her, to think of several things, — that in the five years since

their marriage he had never seen her cry before; that he had never come so intimately near her, yet had never before realised how far apart they were; that her hair curled beautifully on her neck; that she looked a child, and that her youth was pathetic in its loneliness and defencelessness. After all, he need not be surprised that she should have letters she must cry over and burn in secret. He only wondered that he should be sorry at it instead of angry. He had a sense of seeing her as an actress on the stage, playing a scene from some play of which he had not seen the beginning or the end.

— Kate, he said.

She started, sweeping up the letters in her dress, and turned.

— I beg your pardon, he said. Nobody answered my knock, so I opened the door to leave a note here for you, a message from Marie d'Ormand.

She stood up, holding the letters in the lacy skirt of her tea-gown as if it were an apron. She had flushed, then turned white

and flushed again under his eyes. She seemed to have a childish scorn of brushing her tears away.

— Marie wants you to help her out of some scrape, he went on. D'Ormand is making a row about that Greek she has taken in tow. I don't know what she expects you to do, but you're to go to her at once, she says, break any engagement. Shall I have someone telephone an answer for you ?

— I'll go, said Kate.

— Good.

He hesitated and added presently :

— Please forgive my intrusion on such a luxury of grief. Tell the hero of those letters that I make him my compliments.

— You don't understand, said Kate ; you never could.

She said it so hopelessly that his pity for her suddenly found expression.

— Kate, if I questioned you about those letters, would you believe I meant it kindly ? he asked.

— It is not easy to believe in kindness,

she answered passively, and turning to the fire began again to throw the letters into it one by one, watching each burn.

He stood watching her, not knowing how much he had a right to question her. Her money had been exchanged for his title, and that had been all of it. There had been no exchange of such things as love or friendship or confidence. He wondered why he did not go out of the room now, closing the door on her little bit of melodrama. But she was such a child, so alone in a strange land, so ignorant of the weapons of defence, so in danger, perhaps.

As he still watched her, she wheeled around and stood looking straight at him, with some of the letters still in her hand.

—Listen, she said, and I will tell you. I will tell you because I am beginning over again. And before I begin I must get rid of things. I have still a poor little sacred feeling about this thing. I must get rid of that. One can't ever be like other people while one keeps even the most absurd little thing sacred in one's life.

When I have betrayed this and you have mocked it, it will never be sacred any more. I shall laugh at it and begin again.

She motioned him to a chair, and dropped down on the floor again, as if she could talk better sitting there.

He did not speak to her. He took the chair nearest, waiting for her to go on. She was a stranger to him when she talked as she did now. He had known her always as a silent little thing, inexpressive because, he supposed, she had nothing to express. He supposed she talked well enough about dress to other women, and could perhaps say, « Oh, am I ? » when men told her she was pretty. He had never imagined her talking, with red cheeks and bright eyes, rapidly, as if the words came to her of themselves.

— I am learning to laugh at things, she said, but I have never been able to laugh at this, and I must.

She stopped, holding out the letters to him, but he would not take them.

— I cannot read them, he said.

He saw that they were all written in her own writing ; whatever there had been, this must be the end of it. The letters had been sent back to her.

— Tell me about it, he said ; afterwards, if you want me to, I will read them.

She put the letters down on the rug. There was part of a sentence he could not help seeing where the page turned over. It was written in English.

« If I had not you in my life to live for, to live up to, to be worthy of, to believe in, — you beyond the crowd, — you above the... »

There the page turned. He wondered how she would have capped the climax of her sentence. Yet he could n't have laughed.

She told him the story, telling it fast, as if she would not give herself time to think.

— It began long ago at Aix, — please don't laugh until I have finished, then I shan't care. I was a little thing, — about twelve, I think. Mother was there, of course, but you know she never wanted to be bothered with me. The nurse had a lover, the governess had several, so I found it as well to keep



out of everybody's way. I would go off in the morning, and each one would think I was with the other. At night I would come back and nobody would wonder where I had been. I went always to a little house, a peasant's chalet, up on the Mouxy road, where an old woman lived who was kind to me. You know how they build those houses on the hills, a wooden upper story, a thatched roof hanging over, and wooden stairs leading up outside the house to a wooden balcony under the peak of the roof? You know how the maize is hung to dry on the balcony, where the cheeses are spread out, and there is sure to be a bird-cage? My old woman had a nightingale. I think I loved him more than any living thing in the world. Nobody except a very lonely child can love as I loved that nightingale. I remember the balcony as I suppose other people remember the nursery, or their mother's room, or some especially dear part of « home. » I remember how the corn made yellow reflections in the wine colours of the wood. I remember the smell of the wood,

the thatch, and the cheese; the blues and purples of the far hills, the snow-peaks, like white clouds. The nightingale would eat cherries from between my lips, and it was such perfect happiness to me when he sang.

Then one day, as I came up the hill path, I could see smoke and hear people shouting. The house was burning. The old woman sat wailing in the midst of the things that had been carried out. There was no hope of saving anything more. The dry roof was all in flames, and the burning thatch fell on the balcony. One end of the balcony was on fire, and the stairs at the other end had caught. The nightingale's cage still hung there, the bird screaming and beating himself about in it. Nobody dared climb the burning stairs to save him. I started to, but somebody caught me as I ran and held me. I don't know what I should have tried to do. Then there came a man just passing in the road... Why do you look at me like that?

— I can't see what this has to do with the letters. The man climbed up and saved the nightingale. Ainsi soit-il. Please go on.

— You make it sound absurd, of course, but it was not absurd.

— But, Kate... that man, I don't understand...

To De Marne the thing was certainly odd enough.

— I never saw him again. I don't even remember what he looked like, she said. I was too excited to care. But I saw him in that minute as everything that was beautiful, and afterwards, remembering, I still thought of him so, making him everything I wanted him to be. But why do you look at me like that? You are not laughing, I should understand if you laughed, but the way you look at me I don't understand.

— I have a memory too, he said.

It was the memory of himself, those years ago, when he had loved life so that he could not bear to see even a caged bird lose it, which came back to him with a sense of the springtime. Almost he could go back, it seemed to him, to the wheatfields and the poppies, and be that old self again.

Kate took up her story once more.

— You see, I had always told myself stories, pretended things. I was so alone, I had to do things other children need n't do. I had to get my happiness by pretending it. I had to pretend someone I could give my love to. I had so much love to give. No real person seemed to care for it, and he came to be more real to me than anyone who touched me. He was so real to me that all my life I have judged other men by him, condemning them. It has kept me curiously alone. Do you see what I mean a little?

As I grew older I saw what other people had in their lives. But I had my man of the nightingale. Sometimes it was hard to make believe enough, and then I used to make it seem more real by writing to him. Those letters. I wrote all the things I would have written to a person who loved me. They made me feel as if someone did love me. It gave me a sort of mirage of love. For a long time that was enough. I would rather have had my dreams than other people's realities. I would not have given

my King of Dreams for their — for any «Greek in tow.»

— And now, he said, as she stopped short.

— Now I see how absurd it has all been. I laugh at myself. Where have I read of one who sits all life through before a mirror and only in that sees the world pass? I have not seen even so much. My mirror has given me back nothing but the dreams in my own eyes.

She stood up, and so did he. The twilight had gone and the fire had died down, so that the room was almost dark. He saw her a shadow among shadows. He wished the years between the man of the nightingale and the man he had now grown to be could «flee away» as the shadows too. He realised that her sorrow was a thing not to be laughed at. He did not laugh, but began to tell her :

— Kate, that man was I...

She did not hear him. She had turned to the fire and was throwing the letters in.

— Of course I laugh at myself, she said ; but I don't laugh at this, which was good,

just simply, purely, absurdly good, as nothing else in my life will ever be. I was crying when you came in. I cried for the soul of me, burning. Now I do not cry. See it turn black! Laugh because the thing that once was white turns so quickly black! I do!

He came to her quickly and stood beside her.

—There is something I wish you could understand, he said; something about life in the world we call The World, of evil and weariness and failure, and of regret that is too late...

He did not know how to go on.

—Thank you for not laughing, she said, and moved shyly a little nearer to him. She did not see his eyes as they tried to find hers, or hear his voice when he said, half to himself:

—No, you would not understand. — He used the very words she had used before. — You would not understand, he said helplessly, you never could.

## A STRANGE COMING

IN the big dark nursery a child of six lay wide awake at midnight, alone, for the nurse had gone to a ball with one of the footmen; and terribly — beyond any telling of it — afraid.

He, the little Martin, was used to being left alone so, night after night, but he never grew used to the fear; rather, each night, he seemed less and less able to bear it. This night, when Marie the nurse, after hurrying him into bed, had gone, leaving darkness and silence in possession of the nurseries, he had come at last to a desperate resolve. He would tell mamma.

He got out of bed, and crossed the big room and the day nursery where the fire was still burning, and went down the half-lit passage that connected the nurseries with the rest of the house. There was a door at the end of the passage, and opening

it a crack, he stood, very cold in his little night clothes, waiting for mamma to pass. He would not have dared go to her room, for he was forbidden to come on the grown people's side of the door without having been especially sent for; but he knew that before long mamma would pass on her way out somewhere for the evening, and then he would call to her. After a while she came, in her soft trailing skirts and the cloak with the white furs. The maid was with her, and they were hurrying.

Nobody was ever so beautiful as mamma, or so awe-inspiring. Martin held his breath as he looked through the crack of the door. After all, he did not dare speak to her, and she passed him close, going on down the stairs.

Because the big hall seemed nearer to people than the nursery, he sat on the parquet by the door for a long time but at last





the cold there made him brave the dreadful-ness of the way back, down the dim passage, through the dark, to his big curtained bed. In the darkness something touched him, he was sure, with hands he could not feel. Something kept close to him with soundless step and waited for him behind the curtains of the big bed — something that was not really there.

A little light from what was left of the fire in the day nursery came in through the door, making the mirror opposite a strange, long, pale shape. Once when some coals dropped and the fire started up to a moment's blaze it showed the familiar room all grown strange as if under a spell. Then the fire died down and everything was dark again. The clock ticked and ticked, and every time it ticked something came nearer. Martin thought that he would say his prayers. He did not dare get out of bed to kneel on the floor, so he knelt in the bed. The clock struck midnight.

— Je vous salue, Marie, pleine de grâce.

He said all the prayers he knew, even

those that Monsieur l'Abbé had taught him to say for the father who was dead.

— Du fond de l'abîme j'ai crié vers vous, Seigneur : Seigneur, écoutez ma voix.

He had gotten to « de toutes ses iniquités, » when, without knowing why, he opened his eyes, and there was mamma standing in the middle of the room.

He did not wonder how the room came to be light, or why mamma's white cloak was torn and muddy and her hair all loosened about her face ; he only wondered why she came here to the nursery. He felt it a pity that she should have come when the fire was out and the room so cold. He tried to think of something polite to say.

She stood in the middle of the room and looked at him. It was very embarrassing. Mamma always embarrassed him, but this time even more than usual. He wished she would speak, but when she did it only made things worse.

— Do you love me ? she said, in a voice that seemed to come from a long way off.

Oh, my baby, do you love me? If you loved me, that might hold me.

— But yes, I love you, said the little Martin, politely; indeed I should be pleased for you to stay, if it is not too cold for you in the nursery. — He felt that he was behaving very well. — Would you accept a glass of milk? he said.

— If I had only made you love me, said mamma, still in that strange way, your love would have held me now. If you wanted me, if only I had made you want me, I might have stayed. But I must go.

Martin was still kneeling in the bed. He scrambled up to his feet among the pillows and soft coverings, remembering what Marie said to the footman when he came to the nursery.

— Permit me to accompany you until the door.

Mamma came quickly nearer to the bed.

— My baby, I love you. I did not know. I am sorry. I have only a moment. I wish I had made you love me. Remem-

ber how I told you this. Remember,— afterwards.

Her voice seemed farther and farther away, and she was gone. The room was dark again.

The room seemed darker even than before, and the darkness even more terrible. Martin was even more afraid. Mamma's coming, the strangeness of it and of her going seemed somehow terrible. Martin slipped down again on his knees in the bed and went on praying.

— Donnez-leur, Seigneur, le repos éternel. Et que la lumière éternelle les éclaire.

This time he got quite through the prayers for the dead.

He had reason to say those prayers a great many times over in the next few days, for mamma was dead. She was killed that night in an accident driving home at midnight from the opera.

In the pale dawn someone took Martin to look at the beautiful white statue of her. He saw the opera cloak, torn and muddy,

lying in the hall where it had fallen when they carried her in.

Afterwards he kept the strange memory of her coming to the nursery as one of the things most precious in his life. But at the time he mourned chiefly because Medwin, the English coachman, had been killed too, a kind person who had often held him up to pat the horses' noses.

« WHO DAILY FARTHER FROM  
THE EAST MUST TRAVEL »

—THAT is a lie, said the little Trevor girl, quietly and distinctly.

She came forward from her chair in the corner, to face the two women at the tea-table.

—That is a lie, she said again, looking straight at the marquise.

Then she waited. It seemed to her that the silence which followed was full of a breathless listening. The ugly words of the story the marquise had just told stayed on, somehow, in the room.



— You must take it back, she said.

She was sixteen, but looked younger, and there was something babyish in the way she flung her hair from her excited little face as she said :

— You shall not tell lies about her, for I love her.

Then the marquise laughed :

— Heavens, I had forgotten the child was there !

Mrs. Trevor, Molly's pretty mother, realised in her horror that she ought to do something about it all.

— Molly, shame ! she cried ; how outrageous ! Apologise at once to the marquise and leave the room !

— I won't apologise, said Molly, deliberately ; she must take it back. I love Madame de Bresac, and nobody shall tell lies about her.

Her mother's pretty eyes murdered her.

— Oh, don't make her apologise, said the marquise ; it was n't a nice story. I would n't have told it if I'd known she was listening. If she is fond of Felice de Bresac, I don't wonder she is angry. Do run away, Molly, and forget.

— Not until you own up that it was a lie.

The marquise, across the tea-table, waved a deprecating hand, saying :

— But, child, I can't take it back. You

might as well know first as last that it is true.

Then Molly leant across the little tea-table and struck the marquise in the face.

Instantly there was confusion in the salon. The tea-things crashed to the floor and the marquise cried out. Mrs. Trevor sprang up, catching Molly's arm and shaking her furiously, while in the midst of it the butler at the door announced, « Madame de Bresac, » and a voice, very soft, said :

— How d' y' do? But, oh, what may be this ruin and wrath of the gods?

Mrs. Trevor let the child go tumbling against the nearest chair. There was no time to think of anything to say. It was all she could do to smile helplessly as she went forward to meet her guest.

The marquise managed better.

— Molly flew into a temper and upset the tea-table, she said, with her muff against her scarlet cheek.

But Molly, excited beyond all reason, rushed to Madame de Bresac, crying :

— Oh, I am so glad you 've come, Félice !



Now you can tell them that it is n't true !  
The marquise said it, and I slapped her.  
Tell them that Farglione is not your lover,  
and that...

She stopped suddenly.

It was appalling. For a minute nobody could speak. The marquise's face was so red that the mark of the blow showed white upon it. Molly's mother, in awful vision, saw the Faubourg turning its back upon her, and the despised colony laughing in its sleeve. Only Madame de Bresac seemed untroubled, as she stood leaning on the handle of her tall yellow parasol, very chic, and apparently very much amused.

— Now really, she said, with her own little drawl of the *r* in her English ; now really, what am I to do ?

Nobody seemed ready to tell her, and she added :

— It is rather awkward, you know.

— I did n't mean anything, began the marquise ; it was n't anything, *Félice*. The child quite misunderstood...

— Please, broke in Madame de Bresac,

with a courteous little gesture, please don't trouble. I am only glad if I and my little affairs gave you a moment's enjoyment. One loves to be of even so slight a service to one's friends. But what ought I to do? she asked again, smiling from one woman to the other. Ought I to go away in great indignation? Or in generosity, to «leave my reputation with you»? Or ought I to stay and put everybody at ease again? Do y' know I think I will stay and scold Molly. — She put her hand on the girl's arm. — You did a stupid thing, she said. Tell the marquise how ashamed you are.

— I am not ashamed, said Molly.

— Oh, but you must be, to have chosen sides so stupidly, between the marquise and me, Molly. Even at your age you ought to know better.

The touch of her hand on Molly's arm was a caress, and behind the laughter in her eyes was something that was meant only for Molly, that did not mock as her words did, something that she would not have let the others see. It made Molly

hold her head still higher in the pride of her allegiance.

The marquise stood up.

—The cream went all over my dress, she said, and it is ruined.

Mrs. Trevor ran to her, almost crying, and Madame de Bresac turned to her from Molly.

—O Léonie, and that is my fault! Just think, if I hadn't let Fargione... Oh, dear me, then the dress wouldn't have been ruined!

She went down on her knees on the floor to dab at the dress with her pocket-handkerchief.

—Send for your maid to tidy me up, ordered the marquise of Mrs. Trevor, and to have someone take away this mess of things.

—Bring the bell, said Mrs. Trevor to Moby. Why are you still here? Go away, I tell you: I don't want to see you again.

Madame de Bresac, still on her knees, held out her hand to stop Molly.

—One minute, she said, one minute first. Come here, Molly. — She took the girl's hand in hers as she knelt, and looked up at her. — Why did you do that? she said.

—I had to, said Molly.

—But why?

—I cared.

—For me? So much?

—Oh, Félice, so much.

Madame de Bresac looked at her desolately.

—Don't, she said.

Then Molly knew. It was true. In that look she and Madame de Bresac were alone together, and between them was this thing that was true, true of her own Félice. The moment before, when she had not known, seemed long ago, and it was as if the next moment would never come.

—Apologise to the marquise, said Madame de Bresac.—She dropped Molly's hand and stood up.—Apologise nicely. Tell her that you will never be so — so stupid again.

She turned to the others.

— I must go, she said ; difficult, even dangerous, as it may be to leave you, I really must go.

Her little drawl of the *r* was more marked than usual, giving her voice a note of weariness.

— My dear Félice, said the marquise, for heaven's sake, wait and let me explain.

— It would take so long to invent anything plausible, said Madame de Bresac, I really could n't wait, my dear. Mrs. Trevor, don't forget that you are dining with me to-night, — if you wish to come. Farglione is to be there. Perhaps you had forgotten and had made another engagement. You can telephone when you have talked it over with Léonie.

— If you would only listen, besought Molly's mother.

Madame de Bresac took up her parasol. She did not look at Molly, who just stood there, feeling things. The world would go on. There would be school-room supper, and lessons to prepare for to-morrow ; to-morrow would come, with the long chain

of other to-morrows, and through them all she must know that this thing was true.

In the doorway Madame de Bresac turned back laughing.

— If there is anything I can do, she said, to add a little to the story, anything more you'd like to talk about, do please suggest it. There is nothing bad I would n't do, you know.

Her eyes went to Molly's, and there was in them something that the girl could not have seen or understood an hour before. She ran to Madame de Bresac.

— Please kiss me, she said.

Madame de Bresac kissed her and went out quickly.

Molly turned to face the two women over the ruin of the tea-table.

— I am sorry I struck you, she said to the marquise; but not for the reason you think. I am sorry I struck you because it is not your fault that you do not understand.

She wanted to tell them the thing she had understood all in the minute that Madame de Bresac looked at her from the door-

way, but she did not know how to say it. She had learned in that minute that suffering is greater than wrong ; but she could not have said that to them, and they would not have understood.

— You may punish me as much as you please, she said to her mother, just as much as you please, I do not care.

She was happy, because love is greater than the pain of it, so much greater that somehow bearing the pain is happiness.

— I am glad I love Félice, she said. But she knew that nothing in the world would ever again be quite the same.

## IN THE TAPESTRY ROOM

NATALIE DE WAR sat waiting in the tapestry room at the Cluny, the room of the lady and the unicorn. She sat on the bench under the tent and the palms of the desert, where the lady and all her company, down to the rabbit, are come somewhat inexplicably from the château and the forest on the other side of the door.

It was the noon hour and the room was empty, except for the guardian dosing in his chair, Natalie herself, and the ghosts of two little girls.

A clock somewhere chimed the quarter hour after twelve. Alixe was late. She was usually late. At any minute she would





come in, breathless from her run up the little Gothic stairs, amused and curious to know what new fancy of Natalie's had summoned her to the tapestry room.

But this fancy, it happened, was not one to amuse even laughing Alixe. It was only that there had been nowhere else in the world where Natalie could see her, for she had come out for the last time that morning from her own house in which she had known so much unhappiness. She could never go back to it. Neither could she ever again go into the house of a friend. There was to be an end of many things that morning.

She got up to walk about the room and saw the two little ghosts go over and sit down hand in hand on the bench under the tapestry. They were the ghosts of herself and Alixe, pretty little ghosts. She saw them so plainly that it seemed as if anyone coming into the room must see them too. She wondered if they were always there now, belonging to the room as the tapestries did and the enamels and treasures of gold and silver.

She and Alixe, little girls coming here often with their «misses,» had lived so much of their small lives in this room, telling themselves stories, «making believe,» more intimate here than in their own nurseries, that it seemed as if they must have a right to stay on, haunting the place gently. Those days came back to Natalie now, more vivid than any realisation of the present. She seemed to fall again under the spell the room had had then for her, a lonely, imaginative, most unhappy little child. She could see now how her fancies had put little Alixe under the spell of it too, making the room for them both a place of mystery. She remembered how they used to say the room always «felt as if something were going to happen.» That seemed rather odd now, as she thought of it, waiting here. She turned from the little ghosts and stood looking out, through the jewelled colours of the old glass in the great window, at the winter sky and the bare garden.

She was glad she had come early; it

gave her time to think of how she was to tell Alixe the thing she had to tell. «This is the last time we shall ever be together. Afterwards, if you meet me in the street you must not look at me. When to-morrow everybody is saying to you, She was your friend, the kindest thing you can say will be, I have forgotten her.»

Then Alixe came, just as she had known she would, — pretty Alixe, laughing, from her loved and guarded life, from the good husband and the naughty babies, from the safe, happy order of her routine and undisturbed ideals.

— My dear, a thousand excuses! Oh, but I ran! What fun to come here again!

She stood looking about her. She did not seem to see the two little ghosts as they got up from the bench under the tapestry and were gone.

— How like old times! Natalie, isn't it delicious? Come sit on our own bench under the tent. Let's hold hands and tell stories!

She danced across to the bench and sat down upon it, spreading out her skirts with a grand air.

—I'll make believe I'm grown up, she said.

Natalie stood before her.

—Listen, she said, breaking sharply into Alixe's soft laughter. What people have been saying about me and about Gian Carrò is true, all of it. And it's been true for three years. I told Louis this morning, everything. He will get a divorce; and I, when I have said good-bye to you, I am going away, somewhere, anywhere, with Carrò. There, I have told you.

She stood waiting for whatever Alixe might say, but Alixe said nothing. She sat quite still, staring at Natalie dully, with a queer little look on her face that almost made Natalie want to laugh.

—I have told you, Natalie said again, with an unconscious movement of relief.

It was a relief to have told the truth at last to Alixe. That Alixe trusted her so

implicitly had been one of the things all along that had hurt her most.

— Now I am not ashamed any more, she went on ; the only thing I have been ashamed of was the hiding of it. It has been the greatest good in my life, and hiding it has made it like a sin. I told Louis this morning, because I could not any longer bear such a living of lies. Louis has told lies to me always, about everything, and I used to try to forgive myself with thinking of that. But I could not. And suddenly I could not bear it any longer and I told him. It is what he has wanted, you see, I have made the fault mine now. He can do what he pleases without blame. And I—I need not hide this thing any more. I need not be ashamed any more, only proud to love a man and throw away the world and heaven for him.

She stopped, because even as she talked the words seemed to her without meaning. Words could give no sense of what this thing was to her, this great wrong thing from which all the little right things fell away unworthy. She seemed to be looking

at Alixe across a distance that words could not bridge.

—I had to tell you myself. Now there is only left to say good-bye.

—Good-bye? questioned Alixe, stupidly.

—Yes. Alixe, don't you understand?

—But, Natalie, I can't say good-bye to you, cried Alixe.

Her blue eyes, which would always keep that appealing blue of childhood, cried out to Natalie. «Don't hurt us. If you don't care for yourself, care for Alixe,» the blue eyes said to Natalie. «Care for Alixe; you, who have always made what you chose of things for her. think what you make of this now.»

—I can't say good-bye to you, said Alixe. Why, Natalie, I have had you always in my life, how could I let you go? I can't.

She said it as a child might, not understanding.

—Oh, Natalie, it is not true?

—Yes, Alixe.

—You, said Alixe, you, Natalie? You?

—Yes, Alixe.

—And it has come to this? You are going to Carrò. Natalie, you cannot go to Carrò. You simply cannot. It is wrong.

Natalie wondered why she did not laugh, it was so funny the way Alixe just kept on saying, «It is wrong, it is wrong.» There were so many things she might have said — that Natalie was throwing away the world, that she was taking a frightful risk, that it was all danger and hopelessness and an inevitable end — that it seemed absurdly childish just to say, «It is wrong.»

—Poor little Alixe, said Natalie, looking down at her as she sat there, if ever you think of me, think of me here in this room. Not as I am now, Alixe, not, oh, surely not as I am now, but as a little girl sitting under the lady and the unicorn, holding your hand, — a little girl who would have cared that she did wrong.

—But you care now, Natalie. Only you don't know how you care. You have suffered too much, you can't feel any more. You can't feel the wrong of the thing you are going to do.

— The thing is done, Alixe.

As she said it the nightmare fear closed in darker around Natalie. The thing was done and she would not have it undone. She told herself, standing there, that she would not have it undone. And yet she was afraid, with a sick fear of the future, because she could not have it undone if she would.

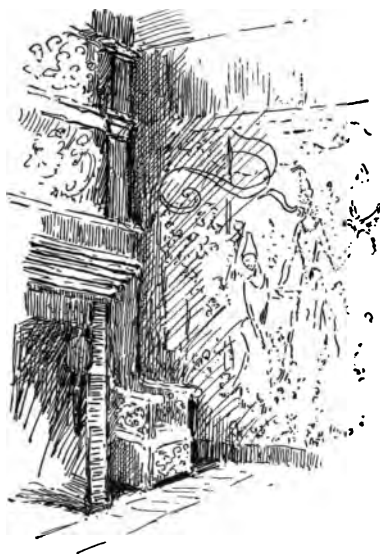
— Stop, Natalie, and wait. Don't go on, said Alixe. Oh, don't you see? Don't you see that, whatever people say about love being the greatest thing in the world, it is not the greatest thing? There is right and there is wrong. Just right and wrong, — as there was about the little things when we were children and disobeyed or shirked lessons. All life just narrows down to the point of right and wrong and the choosing.

— I chose, three years ago, Alixe.

— Natalie, cried Alixe, are you mad? Or am I? There is some dreadful madness in the room. Natalie, come away with me from this room. It is grown horrible. It feels as if something horrible were going



to happen. Come away. Come home with me. It is so jolly there, all warm and bright. We will have breakfast with the



children. We can talk there, I'll make you stay till — till all this horrible thing is past. But here I am afraid.

— Alixe, to Ton-ton, and the children,

and your home, — your house, where your friends come! I? I, who have done this thing already, who have made all this too late? You do not know what you are saying!

— Natalie, I don't care!

— And Ton-ton, what would he...

— I don't care! — She drew herself up, the little timid Alixe, sitting there on the bench with her head high. — Ton-ton must understand, she said.

— Oh, Alixe, he will.

— He must understand deeper, Alixe said.

She caught Natalie's two hands, dragging her down on the bench, there where the two little ghosts had been sitting, and said:

— He must *really* understand. He must understand the unhappiness you have had, the desolate life when you were a child with nobody who cared about you, no mother like mine, and your father — what he was. He must understand how you loved Louis, believing in him, loving and believing for so long. He knows Louis. And you have

no warm soft babies like mine. Oh, I will make Ton-ton understand. I will tell him in the nursery. When I give the baby her bath he comes, and then I will tell him. She is so pink and white, and smells so sweet.

She was looking beyond Natalie and beyond the great window out to that secure place of home.

And Natalie seemed for a minute to follow her there. It was as if she stood in the nursery, by the fire, with the children's toys on the white rug at her feet, and looked ahead down the long vista of her life, her life with Carrò. There would be no one in her life but Carrò. All the world would turn away and leave them by themselves. They might wander the earth over, in the thick of its crowds, but they two would always be alone. And Carrò could go back when he chose to his place among men, but not she. Perhaps some day she would know that she was keeping him, standing in his road, or kneeling there at his feet and clinging to him. It was queer to think of such

things as one stood before the nursery fire on the white rug in the midst of Noah's Arks and building bricks.

—But I must not be afraid, she told herself. I must not be afraid of suffering. It is worth it, Alixe.

Yet she wanted too to cling to Alixe's hand and pray to her, « Take me home and hide me, Alixe, for I am afraid.» She wanted to hide her face in Alixe's dress, and say, « I need you with such bitter desperate need.» But aloud she only said :

— It is too late, Alixe.

— Natalie, I love you so. Does n't it matter, that? Don't you care for that? What should I do without you? Without our friendship? Natalie, it cannot end.

— It has ended, Alixe.

Alixe went on, not at all heeding.

— You love him as I love my Ton-ton. If it had been different with Ton-ton and me, — and, oh, that's just a chance, — how do I know what I'd have done?

Her hand found Natalie's as they sat there under the lady and the unicorn, and

held it fast. Like that the two little ghosts had been sitting.

— I will not let you go, said Alixe.

Natalie wondered if after this the two little ghosts would ever come back to the tapestry room. She thought not. She thought instead there would be always the ghosts of two women. Tourists would come and look at the tapestry, the things in the cases and the glass of the great window, and, though they did not see, there would be always the two ghosts sitting under the tent of the lady and the unicorn.

Alixe stood up.

— Come, she said.

— I cannot, said Natalie. She forced herself to realise what it would mean to Alixe to take her home. I cannot, Alixe. I shall always remember how good you were. But it is of no use. Please go.

— I will not go without my Natalie.

They looked at each other across unutterable distance.

The only thing possibly to be done came clear to Natalie in the sudden light of

Alixé's words, «My Natalie.» It would not be an easy thing to do. It would be rather like dying. And after all it was, in a way, to die and leave a ghost in the room.

— Alixe, she said lightly, your Natalie is not, and never was. You imagined her. You dressed a stick like a doll. Oh, the bore of you and your Ton-ton and your babies! Oh, la, la, do you suppose I could endure it, a life like that? And if it were n't for Carrò, might n't it be your Ton-ton? I could take your Ton-ton from you in an hour, you good little helpless thing! How I could cheat you, my little Alixe! Oh, la, la, how you make me laugh!

She leant back under the tapestry, and laughed a little wildly.

Alixé had grown very white. She looked long at Natalie, and all the time Natalie laughed.

Two Englishwomen, with little cloth caps and cheeks as red as apples, came into the room, and began moving about among the cases at the other end of it. One of

them had fastened up her long skirt with safety pins. If only Alixe would go! It seemed to Natalie that she had laughed forever and could not bear it any longer.

— Oh, Natalie, I can't bear this! pleaded Alixe.

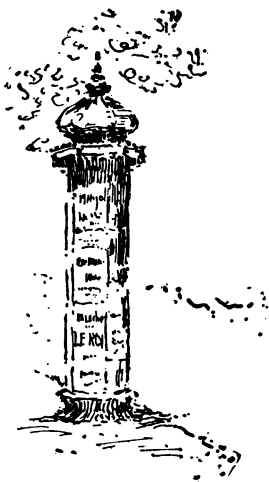
Then she turned and without speaking further went out of the tapestry room, leaving Natalie sitting for a long time there on the bench under the lady and the unicorn. The Englishwomen went, and other people came and went, staring a little at her as she sat there. The guard came twice into the room from his place at the door and looked at her curiously. She could not stay forever there in the haunted room. She must get up and go out through the gallery of the potteries and down the little dark Gothic stairs.

She remembered that she and Alixe had always been afraid on those stairs, and always held each other's hands as they went up or down. She had an absurd childish fear now of going down the stairs alone...

## AN EPISODE

THE old maître d'hôtel looked very ill that night. People were sorry for him, and talked more to him and even more kindly than usual. Most of those who came to the restaurant knew him well, he had been there so long.

In the midst of all the brilliancy, the hardness and polish of the restaurant, the old maître d'hôtel was a quiet little presence of courtesy and dignity, absurdly respectable. People asked him that night: « Are you surely quite well, Joseph? » « A thousand thanks, and yes. » But his eyes had a certain look one sees





only in the eyes of old, ill people. He hovered around the table where Zélie of the Gaîté was glittering.

Madame Zélie was on the crest of the wave that night. The heir to a throne, who had brought her there to supper, had taken much pains to match her eyes with sapphires and her throat with pearls. He thought the throne of his fathers useless if it were not a seat for her, and his father's crown of no value if it could not be an ornament for her yet more golden hair. He sat and looked at her.

But she did not trouble to look at the poor little great Crown Prince. She looked at the other women, and saw all their envy of her and hatred; she saw all their little tricks of the trade, desperate little efforts, little successes, little tragic failures. There was not one of them who would not have done her harm, and there was not one of them who could. It was delicious.

The old maître d'hôtel brought her a footstool, a cushion, which she did not want. He put a vase of yet finer flowers by her

place, poured her wine himself, and worried because she ate so little.

Zélie seemed rather annoyed by it all. She spoke to him sharply, and he spilled the wine.

— What is the matter with you to-night, Joseph? she said, looking up strangely at him.

His old face was tremulous.

— Tell me that I have always served you well... Madame, he said, in an odd sort of way.

To which she answered, a little impatiently :

— Oh, yes, Joseph.

— Always, in everything, Madame?

There was a rather odd note in her voice too, as she replied :

— Always, in everything.

She bent her tall head to hear what the Crown Prince was whispering.

The middle-aged motherly American across the room, who had come there with her middle-aged fatherly husband because she knew it would be no place for a man alone,

asked in an awed whisper if father were sure that was not the Crown Princess. She could not believe it was anybody else. She wanted him to ask the waiter-man if it were not so.

But father counselled :

— Now, mother, you don't understand these things and you'd best not be going into them too deep.

— Well, I never did see such a proud-looking lady, said mother. All I can say is, if she is a bad one, may the Lord do something to humble her pride. Oh, father, look ! What has happened ?

For something had happened in that place of music and laughter. There was confusion among the bright dresses and wines and flowers, while the music went on : the old maître d'hôtel had fallen quite quietly on the floor between the tables. The waiters ran to him. People stood up to see.

And another strange thing happened too. Zélie had left her place, pushing the Crown Prince aside, going to the old man so quickly that nobody realised what she did. They would have lifted him up and carried him

away, for he was dead, but Zélie of the Gaîté was on her knees on the floor with his head in her arms.

Everybody crowded about and stared at her.

— Come away, the Crown Prince said, you can do nothing. The poor old creature is dead.

She did not know he spoke to her. She crouched on the floor in a foam of laces, with her arms about the dead man, and lifted her whitened, hollowed face to all the staring people, crying to them all:

— He was my father, my father, — and I was not even kind to him.

## OF AGNÈS

AGNÈS, aged eighteen, was coming away from her first dance, and she had not had a success.

Her chaperone had said good-bye to her with a kindness that tasted to her of contempt, and old Nou-nou was so ashamed of her, because she loved her, that she could not speak to her as they stood waiting for the rather shabby *voiture de remise*.

Already a wet dawn was in the streets, colourless and without shadows. The street lamps had grown pale with a pallor that made white lights in the wet rubber coats of the footmen and on the shining tops of the carriages. The wet pavements and the windows in the houses across the *Place des États Unis* glimmered vaguely. Yet all the purity and vigour of dawn was abroad in the city.

Agnès at the door lifted her head as though coming from alien kingdoms into her own. Everything else might be for those other girls, beauty and brilliancy, admiration and success, the smiles of the world and its cotillon favours; but this ecstasy of the dawn was for her, Agnès. Coming from the ballroom into the dawn, she had an exquisite sense of coming home. The utter loneliness of the crowd, « la foule d'isolés, » fell from her as the carriage passed through the empty silent streets, and the misery that had been as a fever in the glare and heat of the ballroom left her, as any other fever might, in the out of doors and the spring dawn.

She could see herself, her white cloak, the white butterflies in her hair, reflected vaguely in the windows of the coupé against the dark box and the driver's coat. She thought how carefully her mother had arranged her hair, — poor little mother, getting up from her sofa for the occasion, — and of how pleased she had been with the effect of the white butterflies. The thought of that

hurt Agnès with an actual pain. Her mother had been so happy sending her off to her first ball. The servants had all of them come in to see her in the pretty dress that Nou-nou's niece had made, and they had all been so proud of her. Poor things, they had thought she would be the success of the ball. She let down the carriage windows that she might not see her tragic white butterflies in the glass. The tragedy was without even the saving grace of dignity, there was no « making a throne of it.»



They were crossing the Place de l'Alma. There was no confusion of trams and omnibuses yet, only the market carts unloading spring things under the trees in the Cour la Reine. Mists lay over the river, and the first emerging sunshine began to touch them

with opal fire. The dome of the Invalides and the statues on the Pont Alexandre III seemed made of real gold.

Agnès felt the beauty of it all as a love song in her heart. This was the joy of the world, and this nothing could take from her.

Yet through all her happiness in it ached the thought of her mother's little plans and cares, the little economies and preparations that had been meant to build quite another thing than pleasure in the spring morning. A great throb of pity was in the throat of Agnès as she thought of her mother, waiting for her, eager to ask, « My dearie has had a good time ? »

Agnès leant toward the coupé window to breathe the spring air that floated in from the wet soft earth.

Now the shadows of the budding trees fell long from the east, quite black in the roseate glow, that was mounting, in silent crescendo, from pallor to the promise of a perfect day.

The carriage turned across the Pont de la Concorde. The river, the curve of the



.....  
quais, and the line of the roofs against the sky, gave of their loveliest to Agnès, though she saw them through tears...

—Next time you must wear the pink dress, said Nou-nou.

### « MORNE SEINE »

**MONSIEUR** the American had lived for many years, nobody but the little old lady of the third étage remembered quite how many, under a dimly blue rounded old roof of the Quai Voltaire.

Since he came the old concierge had died and the new concierge had won the lady of his heart, besides sending two sons to college, marrying a daughter well and making fête for a grandson. The old lady of the third floor had grown very grey and deaf. The second and first floors had been let to quite a procession of masters of the various colleges and ateliers, well-to-do students and artistes from the Châtelet and Sara Bernhardt's. The book-shop on the street level had mounted its prices for strangers who dashed up in automobiles to buy Molière and François Arouet and the rest of them, casually, by the yard, thinking

anything a « find » if it were dirty. Generations of the sparrows and pigeons of the Quai Voltaire had breakfasted through the winters from the window of Monsieur the American, and the swallows of spring after spring had chattered with him from their nests above it. The cab horses, standing in forlorn line under the platanes, knew the American and his pocket full of sugar, and had some way of telling him things about uncomfortable bits and straps, the need of water or a blanket, the better arrangement of a nose-bag. The drivers too knew Monsieur the American, and treated him indulgently. « L'pauv' diable qu'a si tellement d'bon cœur, i'm'embete, mais pour qui q'tu me prend ? J'dis rien d'avant lui. En v'la des magnés. » The tenders of the stalls on the parapet were long used to his poring over their wreckage, that holds for some people so strange and strong a spell. « It is mystery and tragedy you have here for sale, Madame the Bonquiniste, do you not know ? » he would say.

« Notre p'tit vieux, » the Quai Voltaire

called him. He did seem absolutely to belong to the Quai Voltaire. One could



have imagined him nowhere else. He had come there from some far-away world, with some never to be told story about him, much as the other wreckage had come to

the stalls on the parapet. He stayed on, as that did, needed by no one, become as it were a part of the life of the river's edge.

And all the while down under the parapet the river called and waited. He had come to it when he was young and eager; he lived long by it, never growing less eager, and one day he went down into it. This happens to so many people that it was not really of importance now, — the sparrows and pigeons could make a living without the bread from the window of Monsieur the American, and the cab horses were too forlorn in any case to notice a loss more or less.

The people who took charge of what few things he had possessed found among them some papers that might have been of importance if only the « reach » of this poor enviable Monsieur the American had not been so piteously « beyond his grasp. »

The papers were the notes for a poem that he had tried to write. The design of it was to echo in words the whole music of Paris, — strange blending of harmony and discord that it is, with a motif in long

dragged monotones that was the Seine running through it all.

It was indeed the « Morne Seine » of those who know Paris — not the gay Paris of pleasure, but that other city which, underneath and through it all, echoes a morne, minor strain, just as the life of the city through all its pleasures, and the hearts of its people under all their laughter, has a minor chord. It was the Morne Seine of the poets and dreamers who know best how to love Paris. It was the Seine as it is to one who knows it through dark winters, or in the strange hour before dawn, or at twilight, or through the night watches; the Seine that has something of sadness even in the misty spring noons and gorgeous autumn sunsets, in sunshine even as in shadow. It was the patient, waiting Seine to which leads every street of Paris as to a climax, a solution of problems, which flows through the city and through the city's life, parallel with the boulevards and the life of them, the Faubourg St. Germain and the Faubourg St. Antoine as well; the Seine

that comes into every phase of the life of Paris, a sombre motif.

Poor Monsieur the American, he had tried to find many beautiful words with which to tell of the calling of the river.

Poor Monsieur the American, he had tried to do, it would appear, a trifle too much, and so had not done completely any of it...

He had accomplished nothing at all, unless one counts just the trying. Perhaps, in a way, it was a something worth while, even to have tried to put in words the music of the city as it swung forward in its life, like the music of the spheres.



## EXIT THE MARQUIS

THE old marquis was dying. It was the best thing he had ever done, which was not saying much.

Through his last illness he had been shut up alone in his old hôtel in the rue de Varenne, with the many servants. There was no one who need come to see him, since his money went in any case to the grand nephew.

One day, it is true, a priest came, and old Charles, the maître d'hôtel, durst not refuse to bring the priest up to the sick-room. Charles was even more afraid of the priest than of the marquis. For the matter of that, the marquis was so feeble, really, that no one need have fear of him any more. The priest, who should have been accustomed to dying old men, did not realise this, perhaps, for when





the marquis sat up in the great tapestried bed, and glared, hollow-eyed, through the shadows of its curtains at him, and shouted, «Foutez-moi la paix!» he descended the stairs and went away rather in haste.

There was one other visitor too. Twelve times there had come a queer, poor old woman, very very old, to the hôtel. Twelve times the marquis had refused to see her. There was no reason why he should see her or know who she was, for her only plea was that if he saw her he would remember. She did not say what he would remember. When she came for the thirteenth time, he said at last she might be brought to his room, because he liked the number thirteen.

Charles opened the door, though he had no name to announce, because the old woman had never given him any.

The marquis said :

— Forgive me that I do not rise to meet you, Madame. I cannot, for I am dying. Then, peering at her as if the room were dark, instead of bright with morning, he

cried, Lisbet, it is you! and leant back comfortably among the pillows, saying to Charles, It is very well; you may go.

The old woman was still there at noon when the doctor came.

— Who are you? asked the doctor.

— I used to be his nurse, she said, when he was a little boy.

— And she was a good-for-nothing, chuckled the marquis. How many lovers had you, Vaurienne, that summer when they sent me to the mountains after scarlet fever and I used to milk the cows?

— Tais-toi! said the old woman, who had no teeth, and whose face was like a nut-cracker, nose and chin meeting.

The doctor said that she might stay, so in the thick yellow sunshine of afternoon she sat by the tapestry bed singing — if one might so call it, the wheezy and breathless performance — to the old marquis who was dying :

“ Sur le pont d’A-vi-gnon,

L’on y dan-se, l’on y dan-se.

Sur le pont d’A-vi-gnon, l’on y dan-se tous en rond.”

It was a droll sort of music to die to.

—I did not mean to be bad, Lizbet, the old marquis kept saying. Lizbet, I did not mean to be so bad. I am very sorry.



## **THIRTEEN LITTLE THINGS**



## LE PENSEUR

THERE is a certain old gargoyle, up there among the many of Our Lady of Paris, who rests his elbows on the parapet, his chin in his hands, his wings drooping, and under his two little horns looks down upon the city.

I knew a little old woman, living in the church's shadow, who called him le Penseur. Perhaps other people too have given him that name.

She was a fat, jolly old woman, the last in the world one would have suspected of fancies, and she said this:

That the Thinker had been looking down on Paris for some hundreds of years, she was not at all clear as to how many; and



the thinking about it all silently for so long had given his face the expression of all the city's moods, so that he was become himself an expression of it, and his face was the face of Paris.

She talked to me often of what she saw in the face of le Penseur, all the while doing some comfortable homely pleasant thing about the little room, coaxing the fire, making the coffee, mending the things of her old man, le Vieux, or knitting tiny white socks for her newest grandchild. She used to say that one look in especial, of all the others in his face, made her love him. For a long time she would not tell me what that look was.

— You would laugh, she said.

— He mocks, I would say. He is a cynic. Yet he is not unkind. He is sorry for all the people he has seen fished dead out of the river, and for all the people who have to go on living. He is amused, vastly, because both the dying and the living men think they must make such circumstance.

— Yes, and he can't turn away, the little old woman would say then. Through all the years he must look on, whatever passes.

When she knew me better, and trusted more to my not laughing, she told me she thought that to the face of le Penseur had come with the years, through all the mockery and cynicism, a great wistfulness. She said that the wistfulness she saw in his face came from looking beyond ; that it was the wistfulness of everyone who looked beyond. She said that the old grey gargoyle up there could see far enough, over the river and the streets, to get a glimpse of something that was beyond all the cold and dark forgetting, all the going and coming in the noise and dust, and yet he could not see far enough to know what that something was.

— What do you suppose it is? I used to say to the little old woman.

Perhaps she was threading her needle, or perhaps she was leaning over the fire as she made coffee. She never looked at me as she answered :



— How should I know, I? And what imports it? It does not matter what is the far thing one longs for, there in the beyond, only that there is the longing.

## THE POSTAGE STAMPS

ZU-ZU gave her the letter. There was no excuse for his doing so, but there was no excuse for any of the other things he did at the mere bidding of Madame Rose Blanche.

—Zu-zu, said Rose Blanche, watching him read, *mon ami*, what is it in that letter to make you look so queer all suddenly?

Rose Blanche and her « Zu-zu » stood in the *antichambre* of her apartment, in the *Cour la Reine*, the confusion of arrival round them, amidst hysterical welcomes from her little dogs and much fussing on the part of the servants over her quantity of luggage.

Zu-zu's man had brought in his letters from the club, where they must have been lying for days, with several others addressed in the same writing, and with quite a little

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pile of telegrams. He opened and read them, reading first a letter which had a deep black border and was in the writing of his wife. The other and earlier ones too were in her writing.

Madame Rose Blanche read : « You cannot have got my letters and telegrams, or you would have come. I am sure you would have come. For he was your baby too. He was ill five days and there was never any hope. If only it could have been I ! I think you would have been fond of him as he grew older. Your mother is very kind to me. I think she would like you to come. »

— You must go at once, said Madame Rose Blanche, with the letter in her hand.

— Yes, I suppose so, he said.

— Suppose so ! What a fool you are, Zu-zu ! Of course you must. I'll have them keep the motor. They can take your things down again, and you will be off in a minute. You can reach the château before dark. Now do, for love of Heaven, be decent to your wife. How horrible to

be your wife! There, wake up, Zu-zu, wake up!

She gave him a little shake. He caught her hands savagely.

— What will you do when I am gone?  
Answer me!

— Don't be stupid, Zu-zu.

— You want me to go, he challenged.

She wrenched her hands away from him, snapping her fingers in his face.

— You never know what I shall do next, do you, mon gar?

— I won't leave you, he said violently, I can't trust you.

She laughed.

— Oh, I will be good. You need n't worry about me quite yet, Zu-zu; not quite yet.

She drew back a little, looking at him.

— How queer you men are, she said. You do care about the boy, and you do mean to be decent to your wife, and your wife is good and pretty and young, and of your own sort, of the real world, a real woman in it, not just a — a thing, like me.

Yet here you are... She patted his cheek. There, there, don't look so hopeless. It's only for a little while. Go home and be decent to the poor little soul, really decent to her, now, Zu-zu! Afterwards we can run down to Monte Carlo. Go you on now. I'll be good, at least very probably I shall be good... Here, give me those letters! I want the stamps for the little boy of my concierge who is making collection.



## LITTLE BRIDE OF MYSTERY

SHE sat beside her mother on the green bench under the hawthorns of the Luxembourg Gardens. Her little white dress was proudly starched and rustled impressively.

She kept her hands in their white gloves very soberly folded in her lap, upon her beautiful new book of the Mass. Her white veil, the veil of the church's mysterious bridal, was thrown back from her serious little face. It was a

round rosy little face, rather freckled, and her blue eyes were like two spring flowers, crocuses, just open to the world, very wide and wondering.

It was May, and the hawthorns were in blossom. The afternoon sunshine was yel-



low on the yellow gravel, there were rain-bows in the fountain, and the pigeons pruned their iridescent breasts as they sat on the heads and shoulders of the queens of France. The sparrows were fighting desperate battles over the bread a little boy in a black blouse was feeding to them.

Little boys and girls were sailing their boats in the fountain, rolling hoop up and down the paths, spinning tops, and skipping ropes.

The band was playing under the trees back there near the Boul' Mich'. People were strolling up and down in the shade — soldiers and students, men with long hair and flowing ties, girls with dotted veils and high-heeled shoes and holes in their stockings; there was a priest with his eyes always on his book; there were comfortable mothers with their knitting; children who played hide-and-seek through the crowd. Farther off there was a group about the troubles of Polichinelle: the little bride on the bench could hear the children laughing and clapping.

Through the fragrance of the hawthorn she could smell the hot gaufres for sale in the stall near by. She was the bride of a mystic bridal, she told herself. She looked down at the Mass book and her white gloves. She must think of tapers aglow in mists of incense.

She did not want to think how delicious those gaufres must be.





## ABSINTHE

IT was with the absinthe that he wrote his Introibo ad Altare. The ghastly part of it was that he could not have written it, nor Israël nor Proserpina, nor those wonderful hymns to the Virgin, nor any of the glorious things, half pagan, half devote, that gave him so proud a place among the world's great men, without the absinthe.

— I can do nothing without the absinthe, I am nothing without it, he used to say to poor old Maia when she stole his money that he might not have the price of a glass.

Old Maia loved him, « Soun paure bèu mète, » as she called him in her soft tongue



of the Camargue ; and she was the one person in the world who did care for him, though all Paris was mad with love of his poetry.

He was not twenty years old, and his haggard eyes still held the wonder of a child as they looked on the world.

— I can do nothing, be nothing, without it, he would cry, and with it I am the poet of the world. Do you know that, Maia, little old big cow that you are? Do you know that I and my absinthe together make the greatest poet of Time and the World?

Of course he could get money, in those days, from anyone he asked it of, and there was no café in Paris not proud to give of its best to him in return for no more than his presence there. But when the absinthe and his genius had him in their clutches he did not realise that. He thought that nobody but Maia, old Maia of the broom and the blue apron, could unlock the door of his inheritance.

That is how he came to kill Maia the day he wrote *Introibo ad Altare*.

In her blue apron, and with her broom in her hands, she had stood between him and the glorious things he might say to all the world, — and he killed her.

The absinthe he had had at the Académie — this was before they tore it down — said to him : « You must, you must, you must. »

Maia, with her broom and her blue apron, stood between him and all that seemed worth having, if anything were worth having in so silly a little world ; so he killed her.

He found the money she had hidden from him in the pocket of her hideous red flannel petticoat, and went with it to the Académie, and wrote the *Introbio ad Altare* there on the back of a wine card. When he had finished it, he read it, standing on a table in the midst of his worshippers. They say that some of them were kneeling.

It was a great moment, then, no doubt, really one of the great moments of the world.

But it was not worth the life of Maia. He knew that. Through all the beautiful

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things the absinthe was saying to him even in the great moment he knew that. He knew that he could not go on, remembering.

He went out from the Académie and the great moment, knowing that the river was there for him, — a chill dark path by which indeed many go unto the Altar of God.

## THE HIRED BABY .

THE good and great English lady apparently did not even glance at Marie the Rat, with the baby and the basket of needles and pins. But close round the corner, in the Champs Elysées, there was a policeman, and she beckoned to him.



— I wish you to arrest that woman with the child and the basket, she said, in her correct, horrible French. She is one of those women who hire children to beg with, and you know your duty.

She did not realise how unpleasant was the position in which she placed the poor man ; for, never having been a *Sergent de Ville* in Paris, she did not know the conse-

quences of offending ladies of the class of Marie the Rat. « Tu ne veux, toi, eh ? » says a friend of the lady's one night in some peaceful street, « ça, c'est pour toi ! » and one would receive it between the shoulder-blades.

The policeman said :

— Yes, Madame, I will send the woman away.

— Not at all, said the great and good English lady ; you will take her to prison. She is a very bad woman. She hires babies. I see her always with a different baby. Come, I insist.

It is a terrible thing when an English lady with no chin says to one « I insist. » The policeman could not but follow her around the corner.

When Marie the Rat saw them coming, she took to her heels with the basket under one arm and the baby under the other.

— Run, said the lady to the policeman.

The policeman ran, because under the eye of the lady there was nothing else to do. Moreover, he did not want Marie the Rat to

misunderstand; he wanted to overtake her and explain. They ran down the avenue de l'Alma.

— Take to the left, said the policeman, when he was close upon Marie the Rat.

Round the corner they would be out of sight of the lady, he thought.

But the lady had hailed a fiacre and was following.

Her victims had rounded the corner. The street ahead of them was straight and wide, and there seemed no hope of escape until Marie the Rat darted into the entrance of a fine apartment house, the big double doors of which stood open.

There was no one about. Marie the Rat pushed one of the doors closer shut, and slipped in, basket and baby and all, behind it. The policeman followed Marie the Rat and squeezed himself in behind the other door, and after two minutes the fiacre rattled by with the lady on her quest.

One minute more and the policeman ventured out and across to look behind the door of Marie the Rat.

Marie the Rat sat on the stones rocking herself to and fro, her face ghastly white, the corner of her shawl stuffed in her mouth. The basket of needles and pins was on the stones besides her, and so was the baby, who was trying to climb up into her arms. He was a nice fat baby and he was crying quite silently, like a baby of dark, secret experiences, because he could not get at the face of Marie the Rat to kiss her.

— You cannot stay here. Someone may come, said the policeman. Come, now, the lady has gone.

Marie the Rat could scarcely get up because she was coughing so.

The corner of the shawl was stained with blood. It was all she could do to lift the baby, who cuddled his face against her neck and stopped crying. The policeman, taking up the basket, pushed the woman and the baby ahead of him into the street.

— Type of a pig! said Marie the Rat; it is because you made me run. I must sit down for a minute.



—That you cannot, said the policeman ;  
you must go on from this.

But Marie the Rat sat down in a heap on  
the curbstone, shuddering and shaking as  
she coughed.

—It will be over in a minute. Then  
I'll go on, she gasped. Oh let me alone !  
In one minute I'll go on.

She was holding the hired baby with one  
arm, while, with the corner of her shawl in  
the other hand, she covered her mouth.

The hired baby seemed to like the way  
she rocked him, for he began to coo  
delightedly.

## THE SABLE CAPE

TO-DAY the little old lady's sable cape has not been hung out for its airing over the rail of the balcony opposite.

Our two balconies so nearly meet over the narrow impasse — a shabby corner drawn hopelessly back from the Faubourg — that we knew each other quite intimately, the little old lady and I, without ever having exchanged a word. Of course nothing would have induced her actually to speak to a barbarian like me, for in the day when she belonged to her world, her world would n't have spoken. It was the world which did not see anybody without having been properly presented. But the little old lady's bird and mine rivalled each other in singing, our flower-pots were rivals in blooming, and in winter we left our curtains open of an



evening, I think because we both felt less lonely seeing each the light of the other's lamp; and so in a way perhaps she did a little admit me to her life.

She must have learned a good deal about me, the little old lady, for our concierges were friends; and I knew about her that once upon a time she had been great in a great world, before there had come losses and a great name's disgrace, and pride had crept away to hide, far away, very cruelly far away, though within call from the world that passed on just the same.

Of that world there seemed to remain nothing to the little old lady but the sable cape. One wondered why she still kept that. She had been ill so long, poor little old lady — in the six years we were neighbours I know she had never gone out — that she must have forgotten how once it felt to wear the sable cape.

She might better have forgotten the cape too, good people would say, along with the pomps and vanities of the world she had lost her place in; but she did not. Every

morning I used to see her chair wheel out on the balcony, her grey head nodding and shaking, her twisted old hands fluttering, while with always the same air of importance she showed her kind little maid how to brush the cape and spread it out in the right



way over the railing. It was as if she expected any day to wear it again, and wanted surely to have it in order.

I might have worried that my balcony was more sunny than the little old lady's, if I had not realised that the sun would not have been good for the cape and that she probably was glad not to have it. I used to wonder why she never put on the cape when she came out on the balcony, until I realised

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that the cape was far too precious to be worn so unworthily, and was being kept ready against some grand occasion.

It was such an odd little old notion that the pitifulness of it seems rather great, now that the birds and flowers are gone from the opposite balcony and the jalousies are closed upon the windows.

It seems too bad, that on the day when at last, after so long, the little old lady did go out, in such state that all men passed with heads uncovered, she could not have worn the sable cape.

## THE DOORS OPEN

IT was the end of the working day, and out from the shops into the streets poured — there is only the worn shabby simile for it — a great stream of life, one of the many vivid worlds of Paris.

The June sunset was red in the rue de la Paix. The light was so heavy and thick, so tangible a thing, that almost one could take it in one's hands and hold it, warm and soft. The shadows in the big doorways were black, deep, and soft as velvet.

In the Boulevards and in the Place Vendôme they were crying, «La Patrie, La Patrie», «Paris Spor', Paris Spor'».

The red light was dusty, and the dust and the light together made a beautiful mist around the column Vendôme. The street lamps were lighted already, opalescent in the dust mist. The circle of lights in the



OUT FROM THE SHOPS INTO THE STREETS

Place de l'Opéra seemed to revolve before tired eyes.

The big shops were working hard and late now for the Grand Prix.

Those laughing girls who streamed out from the open doors were very tired. There was scarcely one of them who did not see the street lamps as reeling things.

They all laughed for the men and boys who hung about the doors waiting, but there was scarcely one of them to whom it was not an effort to laugh.

How many men and boys there were in the world !

Something to eat and somewhere to go, that was what it all meant. Not so much fun as just that, — something to eat, somewhere to go.

The little «arpêche» was sleepy, but it was a question of singing for one's supper.

The proud and stately person who had trailed laces all day long contemptuously up and down before less beautiful persons who had come to buy only wanted a crust and a dark corner, her head ached so ; but



she was just making a place for herself in the houses of glass, and she must not drop out. With her, too, it was a question of singing for one's supper.

The crowd of automobiles and carriages was gone from the street. The world that had been coming all day, to choose and to try on, to bargain, scold, and hurry, had no part here any more.

What had that world to do with this?

## HOLDING PINS

MIQUETTE held the tray of pins while Mademoiselle Lili and Mademoiselle Loulou, and even Madame Alphonsine herself, arranged and re-arranged the wonderful moonlight folds of the dress of Miladi.

Miladi had the sort of beauty which belonged with all lovely shimmering things. Miquette imagined her as trailing the soft length of Mademoiselle Lili's skirt up and down moonlit marble terraces, and wearing pearls among the folds of Mademoiselle Loulou's bodice.

Mademoiselle Loulou had not succeeded with these folds, and Madame Alphonsine,



worked up into one of her rages, shrieked at her and scolded till Miladi stopped her.

— After all, said Miladi, her loveliness reflected in the many mirrors of the salon d'essayage, after all, what does it matter?

Miquette stared at her, for she had never heard a lady say such a thing before. What could matter, in the world of great ladies, if not the draping of a bodice?

She, Miquette, had lived thirteen years in a world where the things that mattered were such things as hunger and cold. She had spent last night, as she spent many nights, supperless, on the stairs, because her mother had certain private uses for the room over the tobacconist's in the rue Lepic. She had decided to accept any invitation offered her that night when she should go out with the other girls to the chances of the streets. She had always before hurried home, afraid of any man who stared at her. She would be afraid to-night, but one might as well. She had been thinking to herself, as she held the tray of pins, «After all, what does it matter?»

Then the lady had said, in the most extraordinary way, just that about the fault in the folds of the yellow silk :

— What does it matter ?

— Oh, Miladi, cried Madame Alphonsine, it is of the utmost importance ; the cachet of the whole costume depends on the folds. The girl's clumsiness is unpardonable, and I shall call in the Manager.

Nothing more terrible than that, in the world of the Maison Bernice, could happen possibly to anybody. Mademoiselle Loulou went over to the window and stood looking out with her back to the people in the room, her thin shoulders shaking.

Miquette was sorry for her. She was not one to cry easily, Mademoiselle Loulou, but she had been horribly nervous for some time, and seemed to have quite lost her grip. It was because her little boy was ill. He had been ill for very long. She had not dared risk losing her place in the Maison Bernice by staying so long away from work to take care of him. She had got an idea that some night when she went home she

would find him dead. 'It made her so nervous that she could not bear anything.

— I shall go for the Manager, said Madame Alphonsine.

Mademoiselle Lili put out a tongue at her behind her back and said, « Animal ! » just moving her lips silently, for the benefit of Miquette.

Miladi turned carelessly away from the mirrors.

— I am quite satisfied, she said ; you have made it better just pinning it this way. In any case, I don't want the girl scolded.

She had not noticed that Mademoiselle Loulou was crying. She was not particularly sorry for her or interested in her. She was only rather wearily kind, just in passing. What puzzled Miquette was why a Miladi did not care. What could there be in the life of a Miladi so important as to make a dress from the Maison Bernice seem of no matter.

— I don't want the girl scolded, said Miladi. What does it matter, any way ?

Mademoiselle Loulou had turned back to the room again. She was not crying, but she could not speak even to thank the lady.

— You may go, Loulou, said Madame Alphonsine, seeing how things were.

Mademoiselle Loulou went, with her head held up, and her handkerchief in a little wet ball.

— I will have my skirt ready to-night, said Mademoiselle Lili, gathering up silks and laces and following Mademoiselle Loulou out of the room.

— I myself go to get those furs to show Miladi, said Madame Alphonsine.

So only Miquette was left, standing, with the tray of pins, in a corner where Miladi did not seem to see her.

Miladi sat down in the nearest chair. It was a straight-backed little uncomfortable chair. There was a big one by the bright gas fire, but Miladi did not trouble to go over to it. She sat sideways in the little stiff chair, her arms resting on the back of it, and she dropped her head down on her arms, hiding her face in them. She must be very tired, thought Miquette, standing there watching her. What could there be in the life of a great lady so to tire her? And the

thing, whatever it was, in her life, that made the moonlight dress seem of no matter, must be an unhappy thing. Miquette stood wondering what it could possibly be. She wanted to go to the great lady and pat her shoulder, as she would have patted the shoulder of Mademoiselle Loulou, and say, « I am sorry for you. » But then, suddenly, it all made her angry, as if great ladies, who did not have to work when their babies were dying, and who knew where they could get supper and sleep that night, had no right to sympathy. She looked at the lady with hardness in her child eyes.

The lady sat there, not moving, breathing in a short sharp way, as if she were trying not to cry. It seemed quite a long time. Only, when Madame Alphonsine's voice spoke to some one at the door, Miladi started up and saw that Miquette was there.

They looked at one another across an impassable distance.

Then Madame Alphonsine came in with the wonderful ermine muff and stole to show to Miladi.

## CHILDREN AND KINGS

THE sunshine was bright in the Tuileries Gardens. It was the season of chestnut and acacia bloom, of lemonade and spinning tops, and of people who were happy. Some of these people who were happy had big sashes, and some of them had Russian blouses and bare legs ; but all of them were happy.



Some of them were sailing their boats in the Grand Bassin by the gate to the Place de la Concorde. One of them had lost his hat, which the wind had caught and sailed away with across the basin to join the beautiful new



boat with the red sails. The owner of the hat was jumping up and down, clapping his hands with delight, and there was nothing at all his nurse could do about it. She was angry. The long red ribbons of her cap seemed to stand out stiff with wrath, which delighted all the happy people round about the basin. They all laughed with the hero of the hat, while the hat sailed proudly among the boats.

Some of the happy people were rolling hoop up and down the wide long central avenue of the garden, — down to the orange trees and statues at the end toward the Louvre, where the figures on the top of the Arc de Carrousel caught the gold from the sunlight; then back again toward the gold-tipped gates of the Place de la Concorde, with the long vista of the Champs Elysées leading up to the Arc de l'Etoile as to a door in the sky.

Some of the happy people were playing diavolo below the gate to the rue de Rivoli. There was a little girl with short skirts and long legs who could throw the spool so high

that one seemed to wait breathless ages each time for it to come back to her rods and string again.

Some of the happy people were playing hide-and-seek among the chestnut trees by the Carres d'Atalante, and some of them were spinning tops on the terrace of the Feuillants, over Strasbourg in her mourning. Qui Vive ? La France ! with funeral wreaths, very shabby.

Some of the happy people were too little to do more than tumble about with the dogs and pigeons and sparrows at the feet of the trim mothers and ribboned nurses who sat gossiping and knitting in amicable groups.

Some of the happy people were running races over on the long south terrace above the quai.

Two sisters, in white winged caps, were leading up and down a procession of little girls, all dressed alike in black pinafores, all with hair braided alike in tight pig tails. The little girls walked two and two, swinging each other's hands, chattering and laugh-

ing. The world did n't promise much to those little girls, but they were asking nothing at all of it yet and were happy. The sisters had stopped the old woman with the basket of sweets, and every little girl was to have a *gaufre*.



The sunshine was bright in the garden, but there came ghosts that one could not see, any more than one could have seen pale flames in the sunshine.

The ghosts were everywhere in the garden. They were the ghosts of all the kings of the world. They haunted the garden because the garden was, more than any other bit of the world, the sepulchre of kingship.

Kings who had died in exile, kings who

had died by steel or poison, kings who died of their own sins, kings who had died in great warfare, kings who had died at the end of the day, or in triumph at noon, or in the night darkly, came there to look on the sepulchre of a great tradition, on the « témoin de mœurs et de peuples disparus, une grande vieille chose, — morte »; and on the children who were playing in the sunshine.

## OF BEING HAPPY

IN the days when the Pre' Catelan was a farm, one knew each cow personally, and might, on rapturous occasions, be permitted



to try to milk. One had one's own special table by the stand of the red macaw. The brown bread was given one in rounded slices, and one laid yellow rounds of butter be-

tween two pieces of it. One's chocolate foamed, and sometimes the petals of the acacia drifted down into it.

Forget-me-nots, flame-coloured azaleas, white and yellow and purple pansies, kept one company. The sunlight slanted through the green depths of the woods and across the velvet lawns, where the babies played and

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the nurses with gorgeous ribbons sat knitting on camp stools.

There was a grey Persian cat who would sleep in one's lap by the hour.

One was happy, perfectly.



## SHOES

**AT** the gate of the Tuileries Gardens and the rue Castiglione an old man stood playing a violin to the winter sunset.

It was certainly as squeaky a violin as had ever squeaked at the Paris world.

The old man had on an almost decent hat and coat, and one could not see that the soles of his shoes were worn quite through, but the truth was that the pavement was very cold and his feet were quite bare upon it. The old man had an ill-natured expression, and perhaps because of that, or because the violin squeaked so unpleasantly, or because the afternoon was so unpleasantly cold, nobody stopped to listen to him.

The long tail of carriages and motors waiting for people at tea at Rumplemayer's reached to the gate, and sometimes the



coachmen and chauffeurs would leave off calling to one another remarks not over-courteous to call remarks, also not over-courteous, to the old man with the violin.

On that same side of the street one lovely lady presently came walking all the way back to find her Panhard. She looked at the old man pityingly. She would have given him a few francs, but it was so cold that she did not like to take her hands out of her muff—too bad—another time. The old man growled at her.

The sun was going down over by the Tour Eiffel. It was so low already that the red light came level and long through the slim, black-stemmed, bare little chestnut trees down the steps in the garden, and the railing of the garden threw black bars of shadow across the red light on the sidewalk.

A pretty little boy, his hands safely grasped in the hands of his smart English nurse, came skipping along, making his little toes touch only the red spaces between the black bars: it would have been bad luck to step on a black bar. He insisted upon



stopping to listen to the violin. He had fifteen sous in a little gold purse, of which the nurse would let him give only one to the cross old man, who did not even say thank you.

The sun went down, and before long the red had gone out of the sky and out of the gardens and the street. The street lamps and the lamps of the motors and carriages were white in the purple, gathering dusk which was deep about the chestnut trees.

A little American tourist came up the steps from the gardens. She had been walking with the ghosts of kings and queens in the paths, past the statues and the fountains. She had seen the reflection of the sunset in the fountains, red like blood, and then the stars reflected there, white and cold as the souls of the dead. The confusion of the street seemed strange to her, and she stopped in the gate for a minute, a little bewildered. The violin squeaked above the noise of hoofs and wheels and motor horns and men's voices. She had in a moment the fancy that the voice of the violin had drawn into itself something of all the other

voices of the city and was saying something to her. She stood there trying to make out what that thing might be. She felt the dusk gathering close, as if it were a tangible thing, around her, and she had a fancy that the violin was calling to the dusk, gathering it in, that it might wrap its folds around the city's multitude of sins.

Suddenly, in the midst of what he was playing, the old man stopped and turned to go away. The little tourist ran after him and gave him everything she had in her purse. It was not much, but it was what she had been going to pay for her dinner. The old man saw that she was shabby and began to thank her graciously; but his words ended in a growl, because he saw that her little cheap shoes were stout and new, and he hated her.



## BREAKFAST

IT was a stuffy little bourgeois restaurant to which these two people came at noon to breakfast.

The man was of thirty-five years, perhaps, plump, prosperous, delighted with himself, patronising everybody, — old madame at the desk, the waiter who took his hat and plump prosperous umbrella, two or three men of little businesses he knew at one of the tables, the maître d'hôtel who showed him and his lady to their seats, — all with the air of one who could order champagne and double a pourboire as it pleased him. The woman who followed him was quite ten years older than he, and must have been beautiful once, in better times and places. She wore her imitation finery as if it were a matter of velvets, sables, and pearls, yet with the carelessness of one who did not find her audience worth playing to.

— Goes well, *ma petite chatte*, said the man to her, taking the better seat ; but in future they must reserve for me the table opposite the door.

— *Espèce d'émpute !* " said the lady to the waiter, who had stumbled over the trail of her skirts. Then she saw the Americans across the narrow room.

They were « nice » Americans ; the woman was a quiet, well-bred little thing, and one liked at sight of it the man's smooth-shaven clever face. They had come to the restaurant because it was typical of its kind, and types amused them. They had the ease of people familiar with many types. The lady of the trailing skirts knew that they were the sort of people who might have seen her in days when her finery was real. She gave them a look that said, « Think what you please, it is nothing to me ! » as she took her place at the table. She tossed aside her furs as if they were of great price and yet of no smallest consideration to her. She pulled off her shabby gloves and moved her hands as if they were covered with rings.



TO WHICH THESE TWO PEOPLE CAME AT NOON  
TO BREAKFAST

She lifted her veil and faced the light as if she were twenty and the end of everything were not written upon her face.

The man was pompously ordering breakfast. Nothing on the menu would do for him, he must have this, he must have that, they must look to it that it was well cooked, and no more charge than if it had been on the card of the day, remember, — not that he cared for money, ah, bah for the money, but that he would not be imposed upon — he.

The woman paid no attention to him. Her mouth must have learned that curl at the corners and her painted eyelids that droop of indifference, in days when she was great in her world.

The man had finished with the wine card and was rubbing his fat white hands together.

— Omelette with mushrooms, my cat, and beefsteak and onions and fried potatoes!

Her black eyebrows went up into her yellow hair.

— I could take only a little fruit and

white wine, she said, that the Americans might hear.

— Oh, come, now, my cat, no little fine airs for me, said the man, beaming upon her and heavily patting her arm. She drew away in real shrinking from him, not only that the Americans might see.

He slipped his arm through hers and said again :

— No little fine airs, my cat.

Something in the way he said it told her that he knew as well as she what would happen when he tired of her little airs, and that she must remember. So she only let the curl of her lips harden and her lashes hide her eyes, listening while he whispered to her.

It did not matter by what gutter or green lane or velvet carpet she had come to the restaurant, her way beyond it would go down the every-day depths of dreariness and dreariness to the every-day end.

The American woman opposite did not seem interested, after all, in the types of the restaurant. She seemed to look away from

things. She crumbled her bread and rolled it into little balls. The man put a dainty bit of chicken on her plate, telling her she must eat it.

— You look tired, he said ; we walked too far this morning. You shan't go out at all this afternoon. We'll go home, and I'll tuck you up on the sofa and read you some most silly story until you fall asleep.

She leant a little nearer to him so that her shoulder touched his. And then she drew away again, because it seemed to her cruel to show happiness to the woman sitting opposite.

— It is not fair, she said, half aloud.

— What is n't ? asked the man.

— Oh, to have as much as I have, and to have had it all come so easily, and to have it all so securely, — I am ashamed.

— You funny child, he began.

But she said :

— Oh, don't be such a dear or I shall cry !

The omelette with mushrooms had arrived at the table opposite and a caraffe of ordinary red wine. The plump man was tying



his napkin about his neck ; the ends of it stood out like donkey's ears behind his own. He picked up the spoon and fork, helping himself and pushing the plate toward the lady of pleasure.

— Eat, my cat, eat, he said ; not every little cat in Paris has an omelette like this ; it is I who tell you. Come now, talk and amuse a man a little and make it worth his while to order omelette for you.

— I cannot eat, the woman said.

The other woman, across the room, said to her husband :

— Let 's go home.

— Yes, let 's, he said ; we'll have coffee in our own little library. We'll have the babies in and romp until you are tired. Then a book by the library fire, « four feet on the fender.»

## SO LAUGHS P'TIT CHOU

P'TIT CHOU, singing at the Marigny, was making all Paris laugh itself into tears. They said that ten minutes of her would keep one merry for ten days afterwards. That was why the great Doctor Visnac went to the Marigny, for he would have gone a ten days' journey to find ten merry minutes. Indeed it was a long journey from his Paris to the Paris of P'tit Chou.

He was the leading physician of Paris; his vogue was as great in the Paris of pain as in the Paris of pleasure was the vogue of P'tit Chou. In his consulting room, in the hospital wards, men and women turned to him their anxious faces, as full of confidence as here, in the bright theatre, they turned in laughter to the face of P'tit Chou. From his world Doctor Visnac came to hers as a stranger to a strange country.

It was a soft, luminous night of mid-May. The air all about the Champs Élysées was sweet with acacia bloom. The lights of the cafés glowed through the trees, the fountains played in the glow, and the



blossoms of the horsechestnut trees drifted down among the sauntering people. The Paris of pleasure

was giving generously to those who knew how to take.

Doctor Visnac went early to the Marigny, for he was not aware that P'tit Chou came on only next before the Revue. He sat waiting, paying little attention as yet to what passed on the stage, as far apart from this Paris of hers as though he were still the Pyrenean goat boy, closed in by the mountain walls of his rugged youth.

At last P'tit Chou's number came, and the theatre broke into applause, clapping, stamping, calling its pet name for her even before she came running, a little late, all

eagerness and apology, out on the brilliant stage. The applause lasted for minutes while she stood laughing, slim as a boy in her white dress, her fluffy yellow head tilted, her hands behind her, her big brown eyes as round and appealing as a child's, and her laughter as sweet with infection.

She stood there laughing: one could not have told, if one had not known what was coming, why the audience applauded her for no more than standing and laughing there. She could not begin to sing for the tumult of the applause.

Suddenly, as if the fancy caught her of its own accord, she shook her curls and flung out her slender white arms and fluttered off in a dance.

Just so a child might dance with the spring breeze on the hills in a whirl of cherry blossoms, or in spray and foam on the firm beach at the water's edge where the waves chased little bare feet along the sand. The music followed her, led her, one did not know which, like the sound of the breeze or of the waves. One did not know if her

dancing came of the music, or the music from her dancing.

When the audience stopped applauding and would listen, she broke into a song as if she could not be silent any longer. The words of the song were nothing, not even bad, but she sang it with such a riot of youth and joy, such a rapture of life, that the audience caught it up and sang it with her, whistling or shouting it, and altogether revelling in it.

Doctor Visnac, too, hummed in his big gruff voice, and beat time with his big boots on the floor. All that had ever been young in him lived again with the life-giving mirth of P'tit Chou.

The song ended in laughter. P'tit Chou threw back her head and laughed as no one in Paris, the city of laughter, had ever laughed before, — the sweetest and most natural, the happiest laughter that ever the city of laughter had heard. It caught up in its own happiness whatever of happiness, little or much, there was in every heart there, and lifted it, and sang it out, and made an

ecstasy of it. No one in the audience but felt the delight of that laugh.

Doctor Visnac leant forward to miss no note of it.

P'tit Chou was laughing still when she ran off the stage, though not all the stamping and calling could bring her back.

When he knew that she would not come, Doctor Visnac tramped out, humming her song as he strolled along with the crowd down the Champs Élysées.

Two long chains of lamps narrowed the way for him down to the great rings of light in the Place de la Concorde. The lamps of the cabs and automobiles showed yellower than the white street lamps above them. Half-way down the Avenue a square of red lights, ruby red, marked a place where the pavement was being repaired. He could see the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde standing out white, with a look as if it were translucent, against the purple distance of the gardens. He strolled along with the crowd, a part of it. He had never felt himself belong to the crowd before.

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An hour ago he would have hurried past these loitering people, having nothing in common with them, no part in their enjoyment of soft influences, of spring and the night and Paris. He would have been a stranger among them, wishing no friendliness, and hostile to whatever he saw,—if he had even so much as seen anything. He probably would not have noticed the man who carried a sleeping baby very carefully and laughed down at the laughing face of the woman clinging to his arm; he would not have noticed the bunch of violets in the woman's threadbare jacket; he would not have understood the pretty girl and the soldier rambling hand in hand, knocking against everybody; he would not have cared that the fountains were playing in the Place de la Concorde or that the rue Royale was as full as it could be of light and movement, a great road of pleasure.

That way went the shifting crowd, and Doctor Visnac went with it. It was his, the crowd, the light, the friendly noise, the movement, all his, all the world was his.

And he had never known it before. All the world was his, all that was beautiful, all that was ugly, all that was light-hearted and careless, all that was anxious and weary and burdened, all that was happy, all that was sad, was his, for his pleasure this, for his pity that, all of it for his love.



He was still humming the song of P'tit Chou as he loitered up the rue Royale, so that people passing recognised it and smiled at him, friendly because of it. He found a table on the terrace of a café where the flood of the Boulevards pours in at the foot of the Madeleine, and had a cup of chocolate, a roll, and butter.



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If Doctor Visnac had been a man of any introspection he would have been amused at this, his way of taking the gifts of Paris, yet he would have known that after all it was the intenser way. To find intoxication in a cup of chocolate, a glow of gold lights and the touch of the world was surely no light way of taking the gifts of life, but rather the way of a man who has seen much giving of stones for bread.

He sat for some time very happy with his friend, the world.

He talked a little to the waiter, and a little to the man at the next table, but he had no need of talking to any one. He hummed P'tit Chou's song from time to time. He thought of to-morrow, and strawberries for breakfast. He thought he would order big baskets of strawberries and violets sent to the hospital. He thought he would be up and out very early, while they were washing the pavements of Paris and the mists were yet upon the river.

Presently he saw a man, just come up to a near-by table, telling something to

people who drew excitedly about him to listen. He caught in exclamations and broken sentences something, at first not paying much attention, of things people said.

A woman's voice cried :

— Oh the poor little thing, oh the poor little thing !

Someone exclaimed :

— I heard her only last evening ! as if that were a matter of importance.

Someone cried from the edge of the crowd :

— I was going to hear her to-morrow.

— Oh the poor little thing !

— She was singing to-night !

The voice of the newcomer, heavy as with the burden of bad tidings, went on :

— It was just after her number ; she only just got back to her dressing-room.

Someone insisted :

— It cannot be true, it cannot be true.

— Ah, monsieur, said the bearer of news ; I know, for I myself am prompter at the Marigny.

Doctor Visnac sprang up at that and

pushed his way through the group about the bearer of news, a man in smart evening clothes, who was plainly shocked beyond any consciousness of the dramatic value of his narration.

— P'tit Chou is dead, someone told Doctor Visnac, as he shouldered by.

— It was heart failure, continued the bearer of news. No one dreamed of it. Only all day, they say, she had complained of being tired.

— Oh the poor little thing, oh the poor little thing ! wailed on the woman.

The bearer of news added :

— They say she told someone, just before she went on for her number, that she was so tired she wished she were dead.

**STEPS OF HORN AND OF  
IVORY**



# I

## EVERY MORNING

**ALLEGRA**, living a life rather strange for a little girl, and most adorable, in a certain old house of Paris, used to begin her days early of a morning in a way she loved afterwards to remember.

When the first light came in between the curtains, to rouse and stir from shadow the stately empty old room, it was as if a voice called to Allegra. She waked to answer it with always the same delight — the same delight, new every morning. Perhaps the sunshine would be red golden, and the tall pillar of it that stood between the curtains would be reflected across the worn old parquet floor; or perhaps the light would be all pale and grey, and the mirror in the corner would glimmer like a ghost. Allegra would tumble into her slippers and dressing-gown, and patter through the shadows across the room, across the antichambre,

out into the hall and to the stairs. The hall was narrow and high, with a round window opposite the stairs, so high in the wall that looking up through it one saw



nothing of roofs and chimneys, only the sky. The door across the hall led to the apartment of the cabinet maker, and was always ajar, and always, somewhat surprisingly at dawn, gave out to the hall the familiar intimacies of cheese and garlic.

In winter mornings the lamp would still be burning on the stairs, its light soft and mellow on the broad surfaces of the time-stained walls and on the stately breadth and sweep of the worn, rather dirty stone steps. In summer, too, the stairs would be trooped with shadows, which the sunlight, coming in through the round window, could drive back only a little way.

The stairs had been built long ago for the passing up and down of very fine people. Allegra always fancied that she heard there a trailing of brocades and satins, a tapping of high-heeled little slippers and silver-buckled shoes and silver-tipped tall canes. She knew charming ghosts with powdered curls, gentlemen who swept the steps with the plumes of their hats as they bowed, and ladies who curtsied, with skirts spread out and lowered lashes. She saw them there among the shadows, quite distinctly.

She heard the laughter of the *ébéniste's* babies, the comfortable plump voice of their mother scolding them, the thumping crutch of the little lame tailor down stairs, and the



shrill singing of Alphonse the concierge, — very naughty songs, — as he swept the court.

All these things together were so dear to her that every morning she must go through a little ceremony of appreciation.

Every morning she came to the top of the stairs to stand in the sunlight or the lamp-light and the shadows, and look down, and say aloud, « Oh, Steps that I love, take me down every day to only beautiful and happy and good things, and bring me back always to the thing that is best of all. Amen. » She could not possibly have told in words what she meant by the thing that was best of all. But everyone knows whose home is for him the heart of the world. She would stand at the top of the stairs and make the sign of the Cross and say, « Amen. »

She would go back to open the curtains and make coffee for her father and herself. She would take him his cup, — « The top of the morning to you, my John, » she would call through the door, and « Up roos the sonne and up roos my ladye, » he would misquote in reply.

Then she would breakfast, if it were winter, by the fire in the room that she and her father called the *Omnium Gatherum* ; if it were summer, out on the little iron balcony over the street.

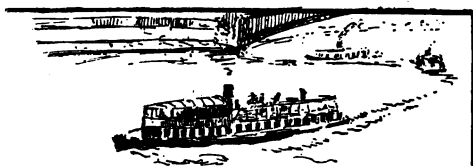
It was a narrow deep old street that had known proud days. Its fine array of gables, dormer windows, balconies, stately doorways, had all grown shabby. The locksmith opposite had hung his big key over the lovely seventeenth-century ornament of the window head under his. There was a fruit stall, heaped splendidly with colour, under the entrance which a cardinal had built wide for his coach and four to pass through. The placard of the seller of *enseignes et affiches à la main* next door hung where there had been a royal escutcheon.

It was a street near the great markets. Long before daylight, in both winter and summer, the big carts from the country — *voitures de maraichers* — would come lumbering through it loaded with the wealth of gardens. In winter there might be a glimmer of frost on the grey-green cabbages

and on the carrots and turnips all fitted in as neatly, one upon another, as pieces in a puzzle; the green frills of the carrots and turnips might hold a powder of snow. In summer there were branches of blossom and armfuls of flowers piled in with the humbler things. The push-carts trundled by, full of flowers or fruit or fish of iridescent colours, and the calls of the *marchands des quatre saisons* rang musically over all the noises of hoofs and wheels and hurrying feet. Allegra knew the street calls, and the voice of every vender, and the types of the quarter, — the old women in white caps, the young women with neat bare heads, the workmen in white blouses, the shop girls with smart petticoats, the baker's boys in white caps and aprons balancing their baskets on their heads, the school boys in black pinafores or black peak-hooded capes, the housewives with their filets, the men of small affairs with their black portfolios. She loved the street the more for its fall from greatness, and she loved each new day that came to it. Whether « the narrow stream of sky »

between the roofs and chimneys were of azure or grey, or yellow fog, or storm colours black and purple, whether the street were full of sunshine or mist or rain, she loved it all.

She would forget her coffee and croissant as she sat planning the day. To a little shy brown girl, so quiet in her shabby dress that nobody ever noticed her, with money



enough for a flower from the market always, and a bag of hot roasted chestnuts if it were winter, of cherries if it were spring ; for a place on top of the tram along the quais, or in the bow of the bateau-mouche to St. Cloud ; for a present to the kind guard who let her sit all morning by the fire in the great hearth of the tapestry room at the Cluny ; for a book from the stalls on

the river wall and a chair in the Luxembourg Gardens where she might sit reading it—to such a dreamy little vagabond girl, without care or fear in her heart, and with a great wealth of love of beautiful things, truly the dusty old stone stairs were as Steps of Horn and of Ivory, and it was to more than Paris and the morning they led down.

After a while, as she sat dreaming, her father would come in.

Tall, thin, bent, grey, old at scarcely fifty, he was yet, because of something difficult to define about him, not a man of whom one thought sadly. The fires that had burned in him had gone out, but there had been fires, and a glow was left. Everything about him was passed and broken and wearied; but he had quiet, and dreams to dream, and so he was quite content. He would come wandering in, « to get to work, » he would say, « on the book ».

Allegra had no memory of a time when he had not been getting to work on the book, and very strange fancies of a time when it should be finished, sealed with the

Seven Seals and laid at the right hand of the Throne. She saw her father stand above all people, before the Throne in the light of the Star he had followed. She saw the Starlight on his face, and the multitudes, multitudes, all the people of the world, looking toward him.

Since she could remember she had been used to his long silences, pen poised over scarcely written pages, or his reading aloud to her, sometimes exultantly, sometimes despairingly, things that seemed to her very beautiful and almost to be understood.

They were beautiful things; the words of a poet and a scholar used with passionate love of their beauty, as a musician may use the notes of his music, in a tragic, a glorious trying to tell of thoughts as exquisite and fugitive and scarcely real as white moths in the dusk, as the light itself of the Star. Perhaps if only it had been all a little different, as one says easily of failures, the world might have known him for a mystic, for one of those strange people about whom there clings through life a something,

« trailing clouds of glory, » of the eternity from whence we come, whose souls have sight of something in the eternity whither we go, — « inland, of the immortal sea that brought us hither. » The world might have discovered him, proclaimed him strangely gifted and inspired, made a culte of him. The Académie might have crowned his book ; it might have been parodied at the Boite à Fursy ; people might have paid good round francs for it, bound fantastically and printed with wide margins.

It is to laugh, one knows ; and yet, possibly, a little encouragement, a little sympathy and understanding, and he might have stood, as Allegra always saw him, above the multitude. A man of the Visions and the Voices, he might, like David, like Mohammed or Peter the Hermit or Ignatius Loyola, have led the multitudes toward great issues.

But as it was, his only follower was a little girl with a pigtail and a pinafore, and all he gave to the world was a glamour of Starlight down the road of the little Allegra.

All her life that glamour would be with Allegra, and there would come back upon her in the farthest times and places, suddenly, for no reason, the sense of the Star. She would know it, have sight of it, the Star that is beyond mountain and forest and sea and city street, that men may follow through the wilderness and through the thick of the crowd, through all the noise and dust we make in our lives, through wide spaces and dark windings, and through the dusk of the older gods, till it stands over the Throne — or perhaps over the Manger. Then would come upon her the child's awe in the presence of great mysteries. She would smile, remembering how close in those days great mysteries had been about the little girl in the pinafore, and how holy a place had been the Omnium Gatherum, as an Inner Temple.

Poor old Inner Temple, — it was shockingly untidy. Shabby old books were everywhere, the dust always thick upon them, the faint musty smell of them a part, it always seemed to Allegra, of the indefinable something that made the room home. She al-



ways kept flowers in the big green bowl. There were always two or three bottles of red wine lying on the mantel, and a basket of fruit on the table by the flowers. The smell of strawberries would be sweet with the smell of lilacs and daffodils and spring days in the room, or summer would draw richer fragrance from apricots and full roses, or grapes and figs and marigolds would bring autumn there, or the spicy smell of lemons and oranges would be warm in the winter firelight. There was some faint odour of the wine, too, and through it all the smell of the old books, grave and studious.

It was a good room to begin the day in, with all Paris waiting for one down the stairs.

Every day Allegra went down the stairs as if to meet a wonder quite new, and always when she came back up the stairs again, it was with a sense of wonders upon her, as if great things had happened that must be told, though really there was nothing to tell.

The wind and rain had swept the quais,

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lashing the bare trees and the dark river, flapping the black cape of the omnibus driver and the white manes of his three horses and setting atilt all the umbrellas of the world. Then a wild light, of steel, of silver, had broken through; the wind had driven the black clouds back from it, all the wet world had caught reflections of it, and it had been so beautiful a thing that one had wanted to see love of it in every face one met, and would have had pain and sorrow and sin and need all out of the world for no other reason than that they deafened and made blind.



Or perhaps a spring day had come to Paris in the midst of winter, with the sky overhead of a blue that made one think of robin's eggs and forget-me-nots and lovers, with all the distances, of the wide avenues, of the quais, of the gardens, mysterious in haze and sunshine. A day when one must buy violets, and walk until one were very

tired, by wet streets that were shining royal ways of gold under the sun.

On such days in the Bois the distances were all of mauve and opal beyond the russet colours of the woods; the lawns held pools as blue as the sky, and mists trailed through the trees, between the velvet green stems through which the sunlight slanted. The air was strange with odours of wet earth and sodden leaves, that odour which always brought to Allegra a memory as haunting as the ghost of one dear and dead. It was a memory of woods, and of herself, very small, down on her hands and knees in the last year's leaves, hunting for something, a flower she had never seen since, little pink cups that grew on a vine hidden under rough brown and green leaves and smelling of all the sweetness of spring. When she had found it she had been so happy that she cried, and a lady with masses of pale gold hair came to her. That was all that she could remember. Someone with pale gold hair had come to her, and had laughed at her for crying with the happiness of finding the

flowers. That was her only memory of the lady with pale gold hair. She never spoke of it to her father, — she did not know why not.

Then there were days of snow in the Forest of St. Cloud, white under the colours of iron and rust, marking with its whiteness every pillar and traceried screen of the cathedral of the trees. The mists down the far aisles swung as incense, and something the odour of incense was there and of prayers. The lakes were thinly frozen, leaving the swans and ducks a hungry crowd clamouring for the bread Allegra brought them. The snow through the woods was tracked only by the feet of the woods people, — deer, rabbits, squirrels, birds.

In those days the snow stayed white on the roofs along the quais, and the gargoyles of Notre Dame looked down on Paris from under white cowls and crowns. There were sunsets at the end of these days that showed the Tour Eiffel a thing of frostwork, white against the sky's fire; and at the end of rainy days clouds that lifted a little from

the still pure lake of gold beyond the rim of the world, the great purple cloud masses painted in with so broad and wet a brush of comet's hair that the purple all ran down into the gold.

One special evening in the Bois, Allegra and her father stood to look, away and away, where the Avenue of the Acacias led straight into the sunset. The long wide road was empty and silent, a strange road. The smoky purple walls of trees on either side narrowed in long perspective to the smoky purple hills across the river, over which hung the round glowing sun.

— Allegra, her father said, standing bare-headed in the muddy road, this is *the* moment of the Mass, the supreme moment, when the Holy Thing is held before us, — can you not hear the bells, Allegra?

For a moment the hills seemed translucent amethyst against the sunset. Then night closed the Host away in the Tabernacle. Allegra wanted to kneel there in the road.

Many of the days were tinted like sea shells delicately over the world, and on

such days it seemed to Allegra that all the sound of the city's living was softened to the murmur one hears in a sea shell of far seas.

Then, quite suddenly perhaps, all in a night, spring would come to Paris. One felt a stir, a waking. The streets were full of new sunshine, more red and gold than yesterday's, and of new shadows that were softer and deeper. The distances of the Bois, the gardens and tree-lined quais, were blurred and tinged with the spring colouring, as the sap mounted rosily through winter browns and greys. They were setting out flowers in all the flower-beds, and the overturned earth was warm and sweet with the breath of life. The tubs of orange trees and oleanders came back to the sidewalks, window boxes blossomed, and hand-carts and markets were in glory once again. One could ask no more of the world than the right to linger on the Quai aux Fleurs on such a morning. Soon the poplars were silvering in the spring breeze in their long line against the Louvre, and the new leaves

of the platanes on the quais of the left bank threw quick lacy shadows on the old book-stalls of the parapet.

Next, summer would be languid upon Paris, with dust in all the motionless air, and a veil of heat quivering upon the river, the leaves of the trees in the gardens falling yellow and brown, the city's life dragging on slowly and wearily.



The narrow street under Allegra's balcony was kind in its shade-giving on summer mornings. The people of the hand-carts would loiter there, neglectful of business, with time to call to one another, pleasantly or not as the case might be.

« Hé, là bas, Papa Coco of the little peas, how goes it? » « To destruction, to de-

struction, my rat, — a peste on everything ! »  
« Then the little new grandson has his  
croupe again, Papa Cucu ? »

Or :

« Good day, Marie Louise, pauv' pe-  
tlotte, it is for me, thine adorer, that thou  
so patiently waitest ? » « Hein, Monsieur  
fishmonger, take thy wooden face out of my  
sight that I may not need to cuff thee thy  
ears ! »

All day the sun would glare at Paris, and  
Paris at the sun, until half-way through  
the afternoon great purple clouds heaped  
themselves up behind the Madeleine and  
the rain would come, wind driven. After-  
wards, when clouds and rain were gone,  
the whole sky would be left clear for the  
sunset, an ecstasy of light.

There were long twilights when Paris  
was a purple city, with a touch of gold  
lingering on its domes and spires. The  
statues gleamed very white through the trees  
of the gardens. Bats flew and swallows  
were darting and crying. The lamps of the  
cafés in the Champs Élysées were like



chains of big orange moons festooned through the trees.

After such days night came to Paris kindly, with a soft gathering in of its purple covering for ugly things and beautiful, things hidden because they were shameful, and things too sacred not to be concealed.

Times and seasons, days and hours were beautiful for the taking of Allegra, and Paris gave her its wealth of story. The past showed its tapestry for her, pictures faded to soft colours and poetic. The present standing out against this tapestry background was real and dear to her, as the ébéniste's dirty baby playing among the stately ghosts on the stairs. The light of the Star was in the Omnium Gatherum with the strong young light of the morning. Her father, wandering in, as much a ghost as were those people of velvet and powdered curls, was the only one worthy to open the Book and to loose the Seals thereof.

If there were ever to be for Allegra a day of dusty moths pinned on paper, of a will-o-the-wisp that was never a star, that

day had not come yet. In her least illusioned moments she thought of the Book as no sadder than her father's vague blue eyes and transparent hands ; it was as dear always and to be as gently treasured.

In those mornings when she had arranged his chair and footstool, his papers and pens, and put the room in what she thought was order, he would say to her :

— Are you going out, Allegra ? Very well. If you don't mind, dear, I'd rather be left quite alone until after lunch. Now go, and don't be run over by an omnibus.

— No, John, I'll try to make it an automobile. May I have a franc, just to squander, you know ? And will you take your chocolate when Madame Sophie brings it ? Remember, if Jacques Dubois comes to say he's freezing, that you gave him your coat yesterday. And if an old woman named Jeanne comes about a petticoat, it is on the table for her in my room. My yellow beads are there, too, for her niece to wear to a ball she is going to to-night with her lover. Don't forget the beads, John ; they are most

important. And would you be annoyed awfully if I kissed the wrinkle in your forehead?

— I'd rather you would n't interrupt me, Allegra dear.

She would kiss him nevertheless, and go down the stairs.

## II

### OF A CANDLE BURNED

—HAST thou thy umbrella, petite? called Madame Sophie, opening the door of the loge of her husband the concierge, and clumping out into the court in the huge wooden sabots she wore over her shoes against the damp and chill of such mornings. Hast thou thy umbrella, Allegra? And where goest thou in this weather?

Allegra had stopped to talk to the marchand de bois et charbons before the door of his shop in the back of the court. He was just starting off his two little girls with the market basket between them to do marketing for the New Year's holiday to-morrow, and Allegra knelt to button on their little capes while she questioned him about his wife and the new baby. The lamplight pouring out from the door of his shop made

a glow on the wet paving stones of the court.

Allegra came across the glow to Madame Sophie.

— I am going out to count how many beautiful things I can find this day in Paris. My old camel, come to the street and let us begin this minute to count.

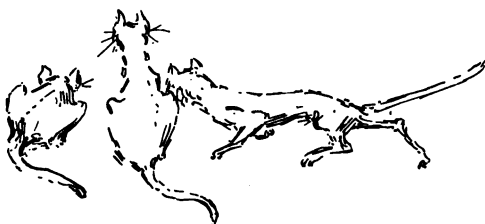
Slipping her arm through the arm of Madame Sophie — fat, untidy, a little dishonest, and very kind — she dragged her to the doorway.

— Look, my camel, look! Behold the pile of yellow pumpkins over there in the fruit stall. Also the holly in that hand-cart. One, two, and three — there was the marchand de bois and his babies, you know. The long green streak of the lamp-post across the wet sidewalk. Four! But I shall never go anywhere if I stop for all the beautiful things just here.

A man who was passing in the street heard her and turned to look.

Allegra looked back at him. She was only fourteen then and had not been much looked

at. That this man should look interested her. She thought, though he seemed more miserable than most of the people of the quarter, that he did not appear in the least to belong there, but rather to the places of great people. She patted Madame Sophie's fat hand, cautioning her to be a good old camel, and went on down the street, singing a little to herself.



The street was muddy. The sidewalk before the poissonnerie next door was littered with shells of escargots and lobsters, and grass and seaweed of packing. The marchande de poisson was feeding bits of fish to three gaunt enthusiastic street cats, haggling the while with a customer over the price of lobsters.

— Fifty sous for a noble creature like

that, a king among lobsters? Would you rob me? You, who can afford lobsters and are unworthy a snail! Put you up three francs and assure yourself I make you a present.

A vendeur des quatre saisons passed, pushing his hand-cart and crying:

“ En v’la d’beaux mi-lans !  
En v’la d’beaux ch-o-ux !  
Beaux et frais et é-pa-tants,  
Vos milans à deux sous-ous ! ”

Then Allegra saw that the man who had passed her a moment before had turned back and was coming to speak to her, taking off his hat.

— Mademoiselle, he said, might I have the honour of talking to you a little?

Allegra looked at him consideringly. He was a quite young man, and ugly, as tall and thin as her father, but with nothing in his face of her father’s sweet wistfulness and nothing of content or kindness. It was the most unhappy face Allegra had ever seen, she thought.

— Yes, she said, at the end of a minute. I should quite like to talk to you, if you will understand. Many people would not understand, you know. — She smiled up at him, and they walked on together. — What shall we talk about? she said.

— It would give me pleasure, said the man, to talk about you, mademoiselle.

— Me? Bien, I am not an uninteresting subject. I have many things to say, and but few people to whom I can say them. I really need to say to somebody, for example, now, that I love this corner, the house à tourelle, and the way the échoppe of the cobbler there is patched against the wall. Do you know that the princess who lived in that house once upon a time was so good that people say dark things turned bright and shone when she touched them? I love the story. It is good to have someone to tell it to. I love the way this street narrows down to the mass of old walls and purple roofs there against the other at the end. Is n't it too bad, monsieur, that the people who live in this street probably don't know



how beautiful it is? And they are people who need to know, because they haven't many beautiful things. Monsieur, do you not yourself want to talk?

— No, said the man.

Allegra stopped short. She had met hunger, cold, and weariness at very close quarters, but for all the man had looked so wretched, it was only now she recognised them here.

— Let's go and have breakfast, she said. I'm starving and frozen. I know a crêmerie where there's a fire, and indeed I have much money.

— Are you inviting me to breakfast? said the man.

— But, yes, come, it is here, the crêmerie, and I have the money, truly. — She was so afraid he'd refuse her little kindness. — I live among the poor people. I suppose we really are poor people, father and I, but we always have enough for little things. You do not mind?

— I thank you infinitely, said the man.

The crêmerie was all fresh and sweet with

the smell of milk and butter and of the wood fire that burned in the stove. Allegra came there often. It would have surprised her, but not much disturbed her, to know that the little place, all day quiet and homely about its pleasant business, was a door at night to rooms of sinister usage, where, when darkness was folded thick around the roofs of St. Eustache, and the markets had their short hour of silence, came a strange clientele, heroes and heroines of ugly stories, haunted creatures, glancing back over their shoulders and avoiding the light of the street lamps.

The woman of the *crêmerie* had smiles for Allegra, but an odd look for the man, and a whisper for him while Allegra went to pet the cat by the stove.

— You take care, you. She's different. You don't get what you're after from me while you're here with her, and, see you, she is not the sort you come here to find.

— I know, said the man.

The woman put two chairs near the fire, giving Allegra and the man double portions

of rolls and butter, with coffee and milk in big white china bowls.

Allegra petted the hostess and the cat, chattering all the time, and making the man take most of her share of the rolls and coffee.

— It is agreeable to have you to talk to, she said. You see I am alone most of the days. Father gives me lessons in the evening, that is why I don't have to go to school. I think they are rather queer lessons, but I love them. We go to lectures at the colleges sometimes, but father is too restless. Sometimes he goes with me to museums and places, but usually I go alone. We read wonderful things. And I love just to be out, in the streets, in the Bois. Sometimes I can make my father come with me or take me to hear music. One has so much to do in Paris. Sometimes I am so occupied in looking out of the window that I have no time to go down the stairs and out. Am I not talking too much?

— You are being very kind to me, said the man. He held out his hands to the fire to warm them, and then drew them back

quickly, not wanting Allegra to see how they trembled.

She pretended that she did not see, leaning down to drag the cat up into her lap, and rocking it in her arms, as if it were a baby. If she had known enough of evil to understand, to read the things that were written plainly, by very strange hands, in the man's face, I think she would only have gone to stand closer to him and in sympathy. As it was, she sat singing to the cat and smiling at her friend across the table, where the firelight glanced in the china coffee bowls.

— You are happy ? said the man.

— Fearfully ; so happy that I fear. Were you ever happy like that ?

— Once, for a very little time.

— It seems wrong, said Allegra, to be so happy ; as if one had n't a right to take so much of happiness out of the world.

— It's not taking it out, said the man, it's bringing it in. All the happiness you can have you add to what there is already in the world, and give to other people.

His voice was not the voice of men who need fire and coffee. Allegra wanted to ask him, « Who are you ? » But she only smiled at him, the smile that lighted all her little dark face.

— Monsieur, you have said a beautiful thing. I must count that in with my beautiful things of the morning.

— What do you mean ? said the man. I heard you talking of that to the woman in the doorway. That was why I turned back to speak to you. I wanted to know what beautiful things you would find.

— Oh, a quantity, said Allegra ; four before I got out of the door. Then the cross old fish-woman feeding the cats, the sing-song of the cabbage man, the things you and I saw as we walked together, — did n't you see things ?

— Only when you showed them to me, said the man ; tell me of more.

— I love to tell things, said Allegra, just to tell the things over, a list of them, — the quais, and the curves of the river, and the bridges. Don't you sometimes go and stand

on the bridges just to look? Up the river and down? And the book stalls on the walls of the quais, with the people rummaging? Don't you watch the people, telling yourself stories about them? And in the trams and omnibuses and in the churches. You know St. Séverin and St. Julien le Pauvre? And the gardens — could n't you stand forever in the Tuileries Gardens just looking, up the long way to the arch? You know the Luxembourg Gardens, and the pink hawthorn there, and the pigeons bathing in



the Medici fountain? And the different things that are beautiful about different streets? Did you ever go down the rue Mazarine toward the river when there was snow on the dome of the Institut at the

ridges just to lead? Spoke never?  
 en? And he had not a horse lived for years in  
 of the year, and he never speak of home. I don't  
 ? Don't you understand?  
 sure that that man is dead? said the man.  
 and mother and a woman, Allegra said.  
 on 8. Then all of them spoke for a minute.  
 Allegra—stood up.  
 ever it is here and keep you here, he said:  
 with her, going for a walk. May I not  
 Allegra. You have been so kind to me.  
 and he was kind a little longer and let me  
 Allegra and he shown the beautiful

looked so ill that Allegra said:  
 Should n't you rather stay here by the  
 and talk?  
 I would rather go, mademoiselle, if  
 will.

Allegra gave him her one franc in the bit  
 paper she had wrapped it in.

— Please, you pay the woman, she said,  
 sitting the cat down on the floor.

►The woman came in. She said to the  
 man:

end? And how you see the church of Montmartre from the avenue Montaigne, like some mirage that hangs in the sky? Do you know the old houses, and the stories that haunt them? — Heavens, monsieur, I am delivering an oration! But there is so much. — And the Bois — do you know the little lonely allées where one forgets that there is any city? The way spring comes there, all soft colours and songs of birds? And summer, green and gold? And the smoky look, and the smell, too, of autumn there? You know how green the tree stems are now in winter with moss, when everything else is grey, and there are only left the deer and magpies? But, monsieur, you must stop me somehow! I should talk on forever of these things.

— Who taught you to care for them, these things? asked the man.

— Nobody. How could one not care?

— But the people in your life, who are they?

— My father, and people who just come and go.



— Are you of Paris?

— No, but we have lived for years in Paris. We never speak of home, I don't know why not.

— Your mother is dead? said the man.

— I do not know, Allegra said.

— Neither of them spoke for a minute. Then the man stood up.

— I must not keep you here, he said; you were going for a walk. May I not come too? You have been so kind to me, won't you be kind a little longer and let me come with you and be shown the beautiful things?

He looked so ill that Allegra said:

— Would n't you rather stay here by the fire and talk?

— I would rather go, mademoiselle, if you will.

Allegra gave him her one franc in the bit of paper she had wrapped it in.

— Please, you pay the woman, she said, putting the cat down on the floor.

The woman came in. She said to the man:

— Will you be coming again? Or have you had enough for a while, and will you be going back to your fine friends, your princesses and your duchesses?

— Till the next time, he said, not looking at Allegra.

— Where shall we go? asked Allegra, as he held the door open for her.

— Where you will, said the man. And then, in the street, he said, Shall I tell you what I want? I want to be pushed about in the crowd, and spattered with the clean mud of the streets. I want it to be a crowd of people who work for bread.

Not talking at all, an odd enough pair, they made their way together through the confusion and tumult of the narrow twisted streets around the markets. There was the mud he had wanted, and there was the crowding very close of the work, shown crudely, laid bare, good of it and bad of it, the work, the fight, for bread. The world of people who struggle after pleasure was far away. Work for things other than bread was beyond imagining.

Allegra knew a world of story, saw it, faded dim, in the tapestry of the past. And against the tapestry stories — of those who had been buried here in the great cemetery, of those who used to come smiling and bowing and gossiping to stroll in the fashionable cloister walk, of those who had been pilloried here or executed while the day's bargaining went on over cheese and chickens ; of kings passing through in state to mass at St. Eustache, and courtesans looking down upon the streets from framing windows — against this tapestry wall, in strong relief, was the world that works for bread, an old woman sobbing desperately because her basket of eggs had been upset, a girl with a baby, who could n't, absolutely could n't, give two sous for a cabbage, a man in a white blouse who staggered under a weight of iron bars into the *dépôt de vieilles ferrailles*, a girl child with dyed hair and painted eyes stopping to look at herself in the mirror of a wine-room window. But Allegra had no knowledge of the worlds that are neither of the tapestry nor of the muddy streets, of the mud there

is in Glass Houses, and of the crowd that spends its heritage for that which is not bread.

— This is what you meant, is n't it ? she said, looking up at the man.

They were passing a wine-seller's shop where a waggonful of barrels was being unloaded on the sidewalk. They turned out into the street, passing close under the horses' heads. The man put out his hand to caress the horses.

— I care about you, said Allegra then ; tell me why you are unhappy. I care.

There was a warm, hearthy, sunny smell of wine from the barrels. Allegra always wished that she had not looked up at the man when she asked him her question. What she saw in his eyes of hopelessness was a thing more terrible than ever she had seen before, or known there could be, or ever could forget.

The man only said :

— I can't tell you, but I thank you for caring. After a minute he said again :

— You do not know how much I thank you for caring.

They went through the great market, across the square des Innocents and through the arches to the rue de la Ferronnerie. When they came to the corner of the rue des Lombards, Allegra said :

— Will you come with me to the church of St. Merri? I should like to go in there.

They turned to the left along the street. As they passed an échoppe de pommes de terre frites, the old woman selling them called to Allegra from behind the strings of greens and sausages :

— Oh, mademoiselle, she is happy all day long with the doll; never lonely any more, and I am so content.

The red light of the little stove, dancing in the copper pots, made a glow through the steam of the soup. The woman's face was wrinkled and old with care, but glad and pathetic in the dark little hole of a place.

— Her little girl is nearly thirty years old,

said Allegra to the man as they went on ; but she had a fall when she was six and her mind has never grown any older. Shall I tell you about it, monsieur ? It is all in so few words. She used to climb to the window to watch her mother go off to work, and one day she fell. They are very poor. Would n't it be marvellous if we had money and could help people ?

They had come to the rue St. Martin opposite the church, where the worn, rich old façade is folded in, a little behind the Maison Foray aux Enfants de la Bourgogne, against a tall blank wall covered with affiches in gorgeous colours.

They crossed the street and went into the church, through the shabby leather doors. Inside, in the great stillness, the odour of incense lingered after the offices, as if it were a something left of prayers. The light of the tall windows was dull against the dull day. There was a mistiness down the pilared ways and high among the arches. An old man in a black velvet cap was sweeping near the door.

— I'll tell you why I wanted to come, said Allegra, if you truly won't think it silly. — She looked up at her friend with a little shyness. — I want to burn a candle, she said, for someone, — for you, monsieur. For a memory of our morning, that I suppose is the only time we shall ever have together. I have a thought, monsieur, that our morning has been like the burning of a candle, — lighted, and then a little while, and then no more. I should like to come back sometimes to burn a candle in memory of it. It will always be a sort of prayer, you know.

— Thank you, said the man.

Allegra bought her candle from the old woman in one of the chapels, a very small little red-nosed old woman with a black knitted muffler over her head. They carried the candle, lighted, through the greyness of the church to the manger in the south aisle, left as it had been for Christinas in its childish, pathetic detail of tinsel flowers and cotton snow. Allegra fitted the taper in its place on the candelabrum, and knelt for a

minute before Mary of the blue dress and the baby lying «entre le bœuf et l'âne gris.» Then she came back to her friend and slipped her hand in his.

—Is n't a light a beautiful thing? she said. I come here often to make a light for those I love. For my mother sometimes. Monsieur, I will tell you. I could not tell you before, but I can now, because now I know that, even if we never see each other again, we shall remember. Monsieur, I do not know where my mother is in the world, or even if she is alive, or why I may not know of her. Sometimes I burn the candle for my father, that he may not ever, ever, die and leave me alone. And now sometimes I shall burn a candle for you, monsieur, and for those you love, that your unhappiness may pass away, your heart's desire come to you; and that you may sometimes remember me, monsieur, a little. Now, monsieur, I have two sous remaining; let us go and buy roast chestnuts to eat on the way home.

They went by the rue Quincampoix, up



its narrow length between the houses that lean forward upon it. A sudden sadness was in the heart of Allegra. She did not want to talk at all. She ate her roast chestnuts, and, to keep herself from thinking, read the signs in windows and doorways: « Location de voitures à bras, » « Expédition de comestibles en tous genres, » « Marchand de primeurs, » « Fabrique de conserves. » And everything was part of the sadness. When they turned into the street where she lived, she came close to her friend as they walked.

Nearly at her door he said :

— Mademoiselle, there are two things I want to say to you. One is to ask of you a great favour.— Allegra smiled up at him in readiness. — Will you keep a poor little thing, mademoiselle, that to anyone else I should be ashamed to offer ?

It was a little worn pocket-book.

— I shall love it, said Allegra.

— There is a little something in it, said the man, for you to give to poor people, like the woman in the échoppe—to do what

you like with. I wish it were more. I wish I had a better thing to give you.

Allegra put her cheek against his arm as they walked.

— There is another thing, he said, that I want to say to you. This, that I shall think of you always as of one whose touch turned dark things bright so that they shone.

— Monsieur, said Allegra, you have given me a beautiful thing in saying that, that I shall put away and keep always.

They had come to her door. Madame Sophie was boiling cabbage. The smell of it was most horrid, but Allegra was glad of that, somehow, for even that did not hurt the minute when she and the man said Good-bye to each other. And it is good to have a thing beautiful beyond any hurting.

— Good-bye, she said, at the end of the minute. I wish...

— Perhaps, some day... said the man.

And she went in at the door.

She did not stop when Madame Sophie

called her, but answered over her shoulder that she had found too many beautiful things to count.

She climbed the stairs slowly, and stood for a long minute on the top step, thinking. She thought of how queerly beautiful things and sad things are blurred together, — the meeting and passing, the caring and losing. She thought of how queerly sadness is a part of all beautiful things, how perhaps beautiful things are the more beautiful because they are sad. Perhaps the marchand de bois and his wife loved the new baby all the more because it was such a frail little baby. Perhaps the old woman of the pommes de terre frites had that look in her eyes because of many tears. She thought of her father's eyes, wistful and sweet, and was sure that she loved him more dearly because of the helplessness that was in them. She thought of the man's eyes, that she had not at all understood, but had loved because they were full of pain. She patted the shabby little pocket-book lovingly.

She remembered that he had said there

was something in it for poor people, and she opened it and looked in...

It was really as if it were all part of a fairy tale, and the shabby man a prince in disguise, for in the pocket-book there were five bank notes, each of a thousand francs.

### III

#### MONEY AND WISHES

IN twelve hours there was not a sou left of the money that the man had given to Allegra.

At midnight she and her father climbed the Steps of Horn and of Ivory, and the shabby little pocket-book was empty.

Neither of them had thought of waiting to consider what were best done with the money. While they were waiting and considering, people would have been needing things by just so much the longer, hungry people and cold people, tired and discouraged people, people who were ill, and people to whom evil might be near.

It was only a question of how to go fast enough from street to street, from house to house, to tell quickly enough, «This was given me to-day for you, and for you, and for you.»

It was not a wise giving, but passionate,—questioning not who deserved, only who needed, not taking count of the sinfulness of sin, only of its utter sadness, the very sort of giving we are warned against,—and the twelve hours had been wonderful hours.

The money came to an end in the boulevards to which the streets of the Temple Quarter had brought Allegra and her father. There was a mist almost like rain in the streets, and the lights of the cafés and the baraques showed like a golden glow. Wet black things, like the pavements, umbrellas tops, and tops of cabs caught golden lights from windows and street lamps and passing carriages. The café terraces were crowded with the holiday crowd out to keep the watch of the year.

One knows how the New Year finds the boulevards, the rough baraques, pasted over with gay affiches of everything that is advertisable; the innumerable tawdry wares for sale in the thick yellow light of the oil-lamps; the crowd loitering about the booths of little gambling games or printing presses;

the feux d'artifice that sputter red and blue in the half rain ; with the bare trees standing up black over the roofs of the baraques, and the people huddled on top of the omnibuses ; with the glow of the electric lights flung to the sky overhead, and the city's voice, made up of all the sounds of living, saying something — something — that one never understands.

The tall stooping man with the vague sweet eyes, and the little excited girl who could scarcely keep her feet from dancing, made their way through the crowd, seeing, and seeing a meaning in, many things.

A humpbacked girl in one of the baraques was selling ribbons, cheap laces, ruffles, and strings of beads to pretty girls, who came, perhaps, with lovers. She would stand, with her terribly big head cocked on one side and her eyes screwed up, to get the effect of the lace collar or the beads around some pretty girl's neck, or a new ribbon for a hat, and would reach out terribly long arms to make some little change or other, interested generously.

The little old man who sold wax candles had a bad cough, and his little old wife was trying to make him put her shawl around his shoulders.

There was a big rough clumsy man in a blue blouse at one of the baraques carefully selecting a doll. It must open and shut its eyes and have real hair. At the next booth he bought a pink tulle boa and muff.

Nobody stopped to look at the gilt photograph frames and trays which the old woman in the white cap, no longer stiff-ruffled and brave as when she started out in the morning, was arranging and re-arranging with hopeless care.

A shabby elderly woman with a shawl over her head stood for a long time looking at a fearful oleograph of a snowy road by moonlight, leading to a church spire and a cottage window lighted by nothing less than the searchlight of the Tour Eiffel. She stood very long, but went away without even daring to price so princely a thing.

There was a girl in the crowd so lovely



that everyone turned to look at her. She had golden hair and black eyes and a little oval face and dimples. She and a shabby student strolled hand in hand, laughing at everything. As they passed the fortune-teller's booth the fortune-teller called out :

— Hé, là bas ! Wait, mademoiselle ! But what a fortune the cards hold for mademoiselle ! Hearts and diamonds...

But she only shook her curls, dimpling at him as she passed with her student.

A little girl and a smaller little girl stood entranced before the musical boxes. The little little girl wanted to dance, holding out her bits of skirts and pointing her shabby toes, but the big little girl very properly would not allow it.

There was a yellow cur in one of the barques who adored his evil-looking master, wanting constantly to kiss him, all the time watching over his mechanical toys with eager tail and ears, and offering an appealing paw to everybody.

A whole jolly family—big nice father, little nice mother, and row of nice round

pink children — were selling postal cards so startlingly improper that even Paris stopped to laugh.

Everywhere was something to see, to care for, and all of it so near and real. It seemed to Allegra that she could put out both hands to the world and feel the near strong touch of it answering.

The money was gone, to the last sou, and all the money she and her father had had was gone too. There would not be even enough for a glass of wine to greet the year. They could buy not one gilt trinket from the woman in the forlorn white cap. They could not bestow the oleograph upon the threadbare woman, — who probably had no wall to hang it on. But they could help the little old man with the cough to screen a corner from the draught, they could stop and talk to the humpbacked girl about just nothing at all, they could help the man in the blue blouse choose the doll his baby would like best and hear how his wife loved pretty things like the tulle boa. They could pet the yellow cur, and persuade the big

little girl to let the little little girl dance to the tunes of the musical boxes. And to everybody they could wish «the Good Year.»

The bells were ringing the year in as Allegra and her father came home from it all and climbed the stairs.

Her father turned to Allegra. She never had seen him so awake before, so roused from his dreaming, or perhaps it was only that the dreams were for the moment a little more vivid.

— New Year Wishes, Allegra, for all the world! Give me your hand and we will make them. — He stood in the lamplight at the top of the stairs, his head thrown back and youth in his eyes. Allegra always liked to remember him so. — Let us wish to all the rich people of great houses a coming out from them to-night into the cold and the crowd in the street; a chance of bumping elbows and being jostled and pushed; of touching the best and the worst of the world. Oh, Allegra, Allegra, let us wish to the poor people of the baraqués and

the crowd a warm place to go « home » to, and something hot for supper, and someone there who has been watching and is glad. And more than that, Allegra. Let us wish to them all a sense of whatever is beautiful in the gold lights and the black rain, and the smiles they can bring to one another's faces, of the voice that cries in the streets, even as in the wilderness.

He took Allegra's sharp little chin in his two hands, looking into her eyes that held the lamplight :

— Allegra, to you I wish that all the stairs of the world may be as Steps of Horn and of Ivory.

## IV

### « OSA FERRO E VELENO »

THERE was a certain spring day that Allegra will always remember as beginning even more beautifully than other days, she did not know why, — one of those special days when for no reason everything seems lifted a little out of the ordinary, when the colour of the sunshine and the shadows, the taste of the air, one's own sense of indefinable meaning in things, one's emotions that seem quickened and deepened, are all intensified so that one feels to the utmost whatever the day may bring of happiness or sadness.

At the top of the stairs, when Allegra came there early, the sunlight lay under the window in a round golden stain on the floor, and up the shadowed stairs there came to her a call of the seller « du mouron pour vos petits oiseaux, » and the elaborate song of the seller of artichokes. There was the

quite indescribable smell that belongs to all old Paris houses, that clings about the walls suggestive somehow yet of tapestries and wax candles, filling the closets as if some fine lady's silks and satins still hung fragrant there, and drifting along the passages with the smell of to-day's fire and coffee.

There was the smell of spring, wet and sweet and warm, bringing even to streets and houses the stir of the world's new life, a thrilling and waking.

— O Steps that I love, said the little Allegra, O Steps of Horn and of Ivory, I want to have a most especially happy time to-day. I want everybody in the world to have a most especially happy time to-day, everybody.

And then she danced a little dance in the stain of sunlight.

Then she went back to the Omnium Gatherum and was very firm with her father, kind but firm. He must come with her for a whole day to the Bois, never mind his writing and no discussion. They would take books and

the lunch basket. They would go by the omnibus, « Filles du Calvaire, les Ternes, » they would take one with three big white horses that had white eyelashes, and they would go outside on the impériale.

Half-way down the stairs she made her father stop and kiss her and tell her that he loved her.

— You know I do, Allegra.

— But I wanted you to say it on the stairs, she said.

The world was made of pale gold and opal and mauve and azure. Sun and mist made a dream world of it. The hand-carts and the markets were lavish of daffodils and jessamine, lilac, narcissus, wallflowers, violets, all the wealth of spring. Every caged bird was singing. The pigeons were strutting in the sun, and the sparrows made a great chatter.

Allegra from the top of the bus looked down lovingly on the world.

The narrow old rue St. Honoré held the level early sunlight as a river in its channel, and through the flood of sunlight went up

and down all the colours and sounds of the street's life special to it, as in every street in Paris some life is characteristically its own. The flower market of the Madeleine



was gay with colour under the colonnades of the church. In the Faubourg St. Honoré the fine hôtels were sleeping yet. They were draping the doors of St. Philippe du Roule

in black, in honour of some one who had had to leave the springtime and the morning. The Avenue des Ternes was busy with its markets, the cook and the housewife were bargaining with the petit maraicher in the sunshine.

At the Porte des Ternes Allegra and her father had to scramble down from the top of the bus and walk across to the Porte Maillot and the Bois.

Soon Madame Rose Blanche would be riding in the Avenue of the Acacias, very smart on her big bay, with the groom behind



her. And the lovely young Marquise de Marvern would motor by with her husband, the old beau, on their way to do « le footing » in the Avenue of the Reine Marguerite. The two worlds would come from their different ways. Now there was nobody in the « Sentier de la Vertu, » where the blossoms of the acacias drifted like snow and lay as soft and white, to be trodden soon by feet from many roads. In the drive there was only the two-wheeled cart of a forester, lumbering along, piled with shrubs to be transplanted. sent in from the Parc des Princes.

Allegra and her father turned from the paths deep into the green and gold of the woods, that were fragrant of blossoms and thrilling with bird notes, and followed a little watercourse of gold and amber to a place they knew where the moss was deep under a great mass of lilacs and one could forget everything else in the world.

Allegra threw away her hat, and flung herself down on the moss, at full length, her hands clasped under her head. Her father

sat down by her. Neither of them spoke for a long time.

Allegra looked up to the lacework of young fragile leaf, tinted exquisitely with topaz and amethyst against the blue of the sky. She was telling herself a story about her crowd of little dream brothers and sisters, who played puss in the corner with her under the trees, and quarrelled and made up and quarrelled again, as real children do. She had never played with children in all her queer little life, and she had never known that she was lonely, or that there was need in her life of anything more than dreams. She was very happy pretending that she won all the games from her oldest brother. After a while she tumbled herself over to put her face close to the warm earth and kiss the little green things that were coming to life from the year's depth of dead brown leaves.

Her father brought a book out of his pocket, the *Canti of Leopardi*.

— Allegra, I will read to you. Do you remember this from the *Ginestra*? No, let us read *Amore e Morte*, — this:

"Nasce dall' uno il bene,  
Nasce il piacer maggiore  
Che per lo mar dell' essere si trova;  
L'altra ogni gran dolore,  
Ogni gran male annulla..."

— John, broke in Allegra, sitting up suddenly, John, my boy, do you realise that we left the lunch basket on top of the omnibus?

— Eh? — He looked from the book to her vaguely.

— We left the lunch basket on top of the omnibus, and I don't believe you have brought one sou, John, and I have only just enough for the omnibus back, and we have nothing to eat in the world, John, if to beg we are ashamed.

— Dear, dear, that is too bad, Allegra. I will read on with this, and then we will decide what is to be done about it. Where were we reading, Allegra?

"La gentilezza del morir comprende.  
Tanto alla morte inclina  
D'amor la disciplina..."

— Allegra, suppose there came one to you who said: Leave that madman who

has nothing to give you, and come away with me in my fine carriage to my palace, what would you do, Allegra?

— Why, dear John, what on earth are you talking about?

— I have been thinking of her for days, he went on, as if there were no need of answering the question, as if Allegra could surely follow the wandering of his thoughts; — and in so strange a way. It seems to me that she is near and has a need of us. Yet what need could she have of us, having all the things she left us for?

— Did she just leave us, father, just go away and leave us? And for what things did she leave us, father?

— I do not know, he said. There were so many things I could not give her, and yet I never knew what those things were.

His blue eyes had the helpless look that always made Allegra feel old and full of care for him. In such moments her childishness fell from her and some dim understanding came.

— It seemed as if there were nothing I

could give her except love. Except love and love and love. I could not even understand the things she wanted, Allegra. I thought we were climbing the Steps of Horn and of Ivory, every day higher. I thought that at the height we should together find everything. Allegra, there was a lilac bush by the door, the fragrance here makes me see it all again. The fragrance came in at the window and filled a room that was poor and all white. From that room I saw visions. I thought that all we wanted in our life was to see visions, she and I together, in a little, poor, white room sweet with lilacs. One sunset you were sitting on the doorstep, under the lilacs, eating bread and milk out of a pewter bowl. The pewter bowl caught the red light from the sunset, and you laughed, and tried to pick up the red light in your spoon. She came with the sunset light in that pale gold hair of hers, and caught you up in her arms and kissed you, and kissed you again, and again...

— She did love me, then ?

— Until... he began and stopped.

— Until what, father? — But he did not answer. — Until what? she said again, tensely. She must know, she could not bear any longer the not knowing.

But he had wandered to far places and she could not bring him back. He did not seem to hear her when she spoke to him, or to feel her touch when she leant toward him and put her hand on his as he held the book.

— Father, you must tell me of her, of my mother. Try to tell me.

It meant so much to her, so much more than he seemed to know. She was wondering how she could make him know.

— Tell me, father.

— The whip-poor-will was calling in the valley. « He is calling for rain, » I said. I did not know that he was calling for tears... Afterwards I came away because I could not bear to hear the whip-poor-will calling for tears.

— Afterwards, — that means after she had gone away, father? When she kissed me like that, was it for good-bye? And she did love me, you said, until — until what, father?

— Until one said, « Leave that madman who has nothing to give you and come away with me in my fine carriage to my palace. » Allegra, Allegra, to-day I have such strange thoughts of her and fears for her. How could she need me? She did not want me in her life. It could be only in death that she might... His voice trailed off.

— Do you think she can be in any danger? asked Allegra, all her great longing in her eyes and in her voice. Can she be poor or ill? Let's find her, let's find her, oh, please, father, let's find her and know.

He lifted his hand with a sad little gesture of dismissal, and let it fall again hopelessly upon his book. He was not looking at Allegra.

She sat quite still and waited through another long silence.

She had loved to think of her mother in heavenly places close to the Throne, the light of the Star making a halo of her gold hair. She had loved to think that from high heavenly places her mother watched over her and cared for her, that she left those high

places sometimes to come near, quite close to her, unseen, unheard, but really there, near and caring. The dead mother had been dear to her and all her own. But the mother who had gone away and left her could never seem to her more now than a great proud lady passing in a fine carriage, sweeping through a palace doorway, not glancing at the little girl who so wanted to love her.

—Father, are you sure it is like that? That she has all the things she wanted and still cares for them more than for us? If she were in sorrow, in some need, father, that we could help, if only we knew?

Her father raised his head suddenly and squared his thin shoulders, as if to meet the world, looking it in the face. He said :

—I would spend all my life to save her from one moment's sorrow. I would spend all my life if only she had need of it,—if only she had need of it.—Then he turned to Allegra.—You must always have need of me, Allegra. I could not take care of her because she did not need me. I could not



understand. I was afraid, and I lost hold. But for one who had need of me I could be strong, Allegra, and spend my life. ]

—I know, dear, said Allegra, as if she were speaking to a child. She felt suddenly very old.

—You would not go away and leave me, Allegra, not even if one came in a carriage to take you to a palace?

—No, she said. And then, Read to me, father; you left out ever so much of that thing, you know, all about «Osa ferro e veleno.»

He did not read, but sat silent, and again she waited and waited.

Paris had come out to the Bois now, some of it with motor horns and parasols and little dogs; some of it with lunches of bread and cheese and lettuce in a filet, and little dogs too, besides babies and sewing.

Allegra could see through the trees the polished panels of motors and carriages in the drive; the glitter of harness and the spring colours of the women's dresses. People passed nearer in the little path behind

the lilac bushes; she could not see them where she sat, but she could hear their voices.

And presently there happened a thing that she was always to remember.

There was a man's voice speaking angrily. It was an ugly voice and he was saying some ugly thing that Allegra did not understand. A woman's voice answered him, in the French of a foreigner, and there were tears in it. Allegra caught what she said. She said it three times over. « Then I shall kill myself — then I shall kill myself — then I shall kill myself. »

Allegra covered her ears with her two hands that she might not hear more of so horrible a thing, and shut her eyes, though without turning she could not have seen the people in the path. She did not in the least know why, but it seemed to her, somehow, that it was for this — just this — she had been waiting that day. It seemed to her that through the long silences that morning, there in the spring woods, she had been waiting for this. The man and woman

had no part in her life; they were only two voices and it was only a minute, and yet it seemed to her that all her life she had been waiting to hear a woman say just those words, — that all her life she had been waiting to feel this shadow fall upon her of the horror that is in the world. She sat there in a little heap, with her eyes shut and her hands over her ears; and it was as if a shadow were black and cold upon her.

When she knew that the man and woman must have passed, she took her hands from her ears and opened her eyes to look at her father, hoping he had not heard or seen. But he must have heard, for he was standing up looking along the path where the man and woman had gone, and his eyes frightened Allegra. She sprang up, too, and stood beside him.

— Oh, father, father, what is it? Why do you look like that? Tell me, father!

He drew his hands across his eyes as if to wipe out of them something he had seen.

— It is nothing. I had a fancy. I thought for a moment, — but not that, oh,

not that. And yet the woman's voice — Allegra — the woman's voice.

He turned to her and held out his hands to her. It was the appeal of one utterly helpless and bewildered.

Allegra knew that the only thing in all the world to do was to drive that look out of his eyes.

She caught his two hands and swung them from side to side, swaying her small lithe self with them and laughing up at him.

— Oh, Jean Sans Cœur, oh, John without heart, how can you indulge your fancy while your daughter starves? The luncheon, John, what about that? Shall we beg? Shall we steal? Shall we find some adorable small shopkeeper-family who will share their picnic with us if we'll help amuse grandma and the babies? Shall we go to the Café de la Cascade and make shrewd men trust us to pay, oh, nobody knows when, for white wine and an omelette?

## V

### OF KEYS

THE late summer noon lay hot and heavy and still upon the quais.

Allegra walked in the narrow shadow of the platanes, trying to make up her mind which of several things to do. She had six apricots with a piece of bread in a brown paper bag, and she might lunch anywhere; also she had ten sous to spend quite as she pleased. She would buy something to read from the boxes on the parapet and then she would decide what to do.

She might stop here on the quai Mala-quais to sit on the nearest bench under the trees, beside the fat bouquiniste, who was lunching there now on a bit of bread and a demi of red wine. She could look across to the long mass of the Louvre and watch the traffic of the river. She liked the darting bateaux-mouches and the slow black barges. Or she might go up the rue



THE LITTLE CORNERED GARDEN OF  
ST. GERMAIN DES PRÉS

.....  
Bonaparte to the little cornered garden of St. Germain des Prés and eat her apricots beneath the gargoyles.

She passed the Institut, sauntering around the curve of the quai. The heat quivered like a gauze veil over the water and against the mass of green below the Pont Neuf and the blue roofs of the old buildings on the Island. Where the rue Segulier comes out on the quai des Grands Augustins she stopped by the parapet just to look across to the great mass of the Palais de Justice and the slim spire of the Ste. Chapelle over its roofs. Up the river was the Pont St. Michel, of three arches, the noon crowd passing over slowly in the heat. The towers of Notre Dame over the Préfecture de Police were almost black against the intense blue of the sky. Everything was softened through the gauze veil. The patient fishers drowsed over their rods. Two big dray horses were resting unharnessed down on the margin, and down there the washer of dogs was clipping a black poodle.

Allegra stood so long, looking, that the

old woman who sold queer odds and ends of things in the *boite de vieilles ferrailles* there on the parapet, put a knotted hand on her arm, saying :

— At what do you look, *petite* ?

She was such a little old woman as one might expect to fly off on a broomstick at any minute, or change into a black cat while one talked to her. Her little black eyes took hold of Allegra's and kept them.

— Do you see anything in the shadow of the bridge ?

— Anything more than there is, you mean ? asked Allegra. More than the man fishing and the coal barge and the water ?

The old woman nodded.

— No, I see nothing more.

— I don't know why I thought you would, said the little old woman, unless because you remind me of someone. You have darker hair and you are not pretty, but you remind me of her. Come look at the things I have for sale.



There were broken locks, door knobs, odd keys, hooks, rings, worn leather straps, nails, screws, buttons, all sorts of strayed things in the old woman's boxes.

— Now, said the old witch, what do you see there?

— Many stories, said Allegra.

The old witch clapped her hands.

— I knew you would ! she said. I knew you were like that. What of the things do you like best ?

— The keys, said Allegra.

— I knew you would, said the old woman again.

— Because of what they have locked and unlocked, and for the reasons why they were lost, or just not needed any more.

— Look through them, said the old witch, and see which of them you like best. I know which one you will choose, petite. Tell me stories of them.

— Here is a great, heavy, rude old one, said Allegra, taking it up and turning it round and round. I think it opened and closed some dungeon door with a dreadful

sound. I think it locked in crimes, I am sure it did, aren't you, madame, and repentances and despair and tragic mistakes? This little fine key was the key of a girl's desk where she kept her lover's letters. I think she slept with it under her pillow. This is the key of a gate in a convent wall. One of the nuns stole it, and opened the gate, and locked it behind her when she stood free outside. Or perhaps someone on the inside locked it to keep out one who knocked for refuge. This is the key of a lady's jewel box, and this of a man's watch, that ticked his life through and went on ticking after he was dead. This big everyday one was a house key, that gave home, son chez soi, to someone. This is the key of a shrine; the wax of tapers has dripped upon it. And this, — I cannot think what this key is, madame.

It was a queer little key of very careful old workmanship. Where it would have fitted in the lock it had three blunt prongs, and its handle was beaten out into mercury wings minutely chased.

— I like it best of all, said Allegra, holding it.

— I knew you would, said the old witch, peering at Allegra through the sunshine. There was no shade just there. The little old woman blinked her sharp eyes, screwing them up and peering « as a tailor through the eye of his needle. »

— But I cannot imagine anything about it; what do you think it was the key of, madame?

— I do not know.

— Why did you think that I should choose it?

— No matter, said the old woman.

Allegra turned the key over and over, looking at it closely, putting it to her ear to listen to it, as if it might whisper secrets. I wish I could feel something about it, she said, I wonder why I can't. And I seem, somehow, to have seen it before.

— Five sous. Will you not buy it, mademoiselle?

— But yes, madame. And will you not have some of my apricots? She was pulling

a narrow white ribbon up over her collar and fastening the key on it.

— Why do you do that ? said the woman, sharply. Most people carry their keys in their pockets.

There was a little gold locket on the ribbon.

— What's in that ? said the woman.

— Nothing at all, said Allegra. And then, without knowing why, she told a secret to the old witch woman. I pretend that there is a lock of pale gold hair in it, she said.

The old woman looked at her, when she said that, very curiously and rather as if she were afraid.

— Mademoiselle, I do not want the key to bring bad fortune to you, at the risk of losing the five sous, she said. Mademoiselle, I got the key at the sale of the things of a woman — there was nothing to identify her — who threw herself over from the Pont St. Michel one fine spring day. I saw her taken out dead in the afternoon's shadows there under the bridge.

— Oh, the poor one, said Allegra, la pauvrete ! I shall care for her queer little old key.

— But, said the witch woman, it is very strange, mademoiselle, for she wore the key hung on a white ribbon around her neck. And, mademoiselle, you remind me of her, though you are so unlike. It is very strange, mademoiselle.

She drew away a little from Allegra.

Allegra's eyes were eager with sympathy.

— The poor one ! she said again, how terrible to think of anyone wanting to leave this dear world ! I shall keep the key the more lovingly, madame, because it means some great sorrow, though I shall never know what. And will you not take of my apricots, madame ? Permit me. I am so fond of apricots, are n't you, madame ? They taste of sunlight. Good-bye, madame. I must take my key and go. I must hurry, for I have much to do, just doing nothing, to-day in Paris.

— Adieu, petite. I hope you go home, chez toi, to happiness.

— Oh yes, thank you, madame, said Allegra ; to happiness, up the most adorable stairs.



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